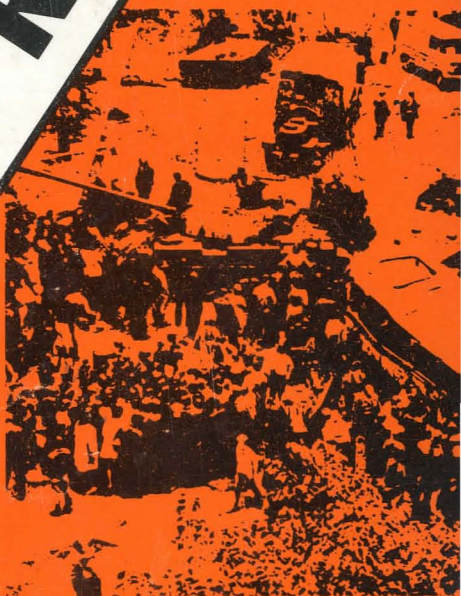




Two Essays
on Post-war
Stalinism

'Communists' Against Revolution





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Stalinism

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Preface

The role of Stalinism in the post-war world is one of the most perplexing, intriguing, contradictory and *practical* problems confronting the Trotskyist movement. And it is a problem that has in the main been only inadequately considered and superficially answered. For all these reasons it has stood squarely at the centre of the post-war political crises that have brought the disorientation and disintegration of the Fourth International which was founded forty years ago as the continuity of revolutionary Marxism and proletarian internationalism.

The very reason for the foundation of the Fourth International was the analysis by Trotsky and the Left Opposition in 1933 that the Comintern by then totally dominated by the Stalinist bureaucracy was *dead* for the purposes of revolution and a thoroughly *counter-revolutionary* force within the international workers' movement.

At the same time the Stalinist bureaucracy itself was recognised as a fundamentally *unstable*, bonapartist form of rule, balancing between the nationalised property relations established in the October 1917 revolution and the international pressures of imperialism. Trotsky established a clear position of unconditional defence of the Soviet Union as a workers' state against imperialism, coupled to the fight to prepare the leadership for a *political revolution* for the overthrow of the bureaucracy and restoration of soviet power.

This analysis has continually had to be defended both against tendencies that have attempted to see the Stalinist bureaucracy as a *permanent* and *progressive* force in the workers' movement (pre-war centrists, and currents in the post-war Fourth International up to the present day) and against those who see it as a permanent new ruling *class*

in the Soviet Union (pre-war Schachtmanites, and 'state capitalist' groups today.

The pressure to revise these positions increased dramatically when the post-war period found the Stalinist bureaucracy not only still in power but even extending its power into Eastern Europe.

Each of the tendencies that has succumbed to this pressure has latched on to aspects of the post-war actions of the Stalinist bureaucracy as "evidence" for its one-sided and deceptive analysis. This is because neither tendency is able to grasp the essentially *contradictory* nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy as a reactionary, counter-revolutionary excrescence which nevertheless *feeds off the nationalised property relations established in October 1917*. In its own, bureaucratic, fashion, the Kremlin bureaucracy seeks to defend these property relations (which are the source of its power and material privileges) against imperialism, while attempting to prevent the slightest movement towards political independence on the part of the working class internationally—which would disrupt the delicate balance of class forces on which the bureaucracy rests. Thus its every action is shot through with the most profound contradictions, defying all but the most rigorous analysis.

In defending the Trotskyist perspective, the most important starting point is therefore the question of the *political independence* of the working class from the Stalinist bureaucracy in the struggle for state power.

It is this question, combined with an analysis of the *world* counter-revolutionary strategy of Stalinism, which provides the key to refuting any idea that the Stalinist bureaucracy can evolve towards 'left centrism', and to sharply exposing the reactionary nature of "Euro-communist" criticism of the regimes of Eastern Europe. This fight for political independence also confirms the need for the building of Trotskyist parties to carry through political revolution in Cuba, Vietnam, China and Yugoslavia as well as the USSR and Eastern Europe.

It is necessary for the world Trotskyist movement to re-examine those issues bearing on the post-war role of Stalinism in order to clarify and correct the wrong positions that have been adopted and that have disoriented and split the International itself.

Tim Wohlforth's essay *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, written in 1961-3, is a major contribution to such a re-examination. Yet it is a booklet which has been neglected by every major tendency terming itself Trotskyist. The reason is clear. By re-opening discussion on the post-war events in Eastern Europe and China, Wohlforth attempted to find the key to the role and involvement of Stalinism in the Cuban Revolution. His objective was to reassert, on the basis of a thorough analysis of events, the consistently *counter-revolutionary* role of Stalinism even at the point where capitalist property relations were being overturned in Eastern

Europe under the aegis of the Red Army and in China by Communist forces under Mao. But in doing so Wohlforth was forced into conflict with the existing positions of all the leading figures in the post-war Fourth International. And sooner than answer the points Wohlforth raised, every one of these leaders avoided discussing them, clinging to their established positions.

Wohlforth succeeded admirably in proving his case in relation to the East European events. But he was quite unable to go further and relate his theory to developments in Cuba—the actual starting point of his investigations.

And even having developed a theoretical understanding of post-war Stalinism far in advance of the leading members of the Trotskyist movement, Wohlforth retreated from a fight for his positions. Instead he allowed his work to be brushed aside, ignored, and virtually forgotten by all but a very few individuals.

Adam Westoby's essay *On Wohlforth's 'Theory of Structural Assimilation'*, (completed in the winter of 1976) sets out to explain these curious aspects of Wohlforth's work. It also goes on to expand its analysis of events in Eastern Europe and China, examine some weaknesses within the *Theory* as it stands, and explore the prospects for applying the same theoretical approach to the Cuban revolution.

Central to both Westoby's approach and that of Wohlforth is the conception of Stalinism as a system that operates on a world scale, and that must be viewed *as a whole*—contradictory as that whole picture may appear at first sight. Any attempt to view the actions of Stalinism in this or that country in isolation from a historical and international analysis, they argue, must result in a descent to mere impressionism, opening the door to catastrophic political errors.

In publishing these essays, the method of which is in accord with our own approach to the problems of post-war Stalinism, the Workers Socialist League is taking further steps to fulfil its policy of attempting to stimulate a thorough international discussion both on the post-war evolution of Stalinism and on the consequent problems within the Trotskyist movement.

Further material on these questions will continue to appear in *Socialist Press* and in our theoretical journal *Trotskyism Today*. We hope that the republication of Wohlforth's work at this point can prompt a new turn towards these crucial problems and give a fresh impetus to the struggle to reconstruct the Trotskyist Fourth International on the basis of a positive theoretical and practical reaffirmation of the principles on which it was founded forty years ago.

John Lister, April 1978.

The Theory of Structural Assimilation

by Tim Wohlforth

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The development of this theoretical project on Stalinism has been rather intimately entwined with political struggles within the Trotskyist movement. Ideally it is best, of course, to begin one's battles with a rounded theoretical understanding of the issues one is battling over. But political life is rarely ideal and most people learn what they are battling over in the course of being banged over the head (theoretically, of course). The important thing is to develop during the course of struggle, no matter how confused one may be in the beginning. Those who do not develop are either destroyed or worthless as far as building a revolutionary movement is concerned.

It all began at the January 1961 National Committee Plenum of the Socialist Workers Party. The overwhelming majority of the SWP leadership had come to the conclusion that Cuba was a workers' state and were in the process of adopting wholesale the method and theoretical outlook of Michel Pablo, whom they had fought less than a decade earlier. A small minority was formed in opposition to this turn, of which I am afraid I was the sole representative on the National Committee at that time.

We did our best to resist the stampede back to Pablo which was the major feature of the pre-convention discussion which followed the Plenum and of the SWP Convention which was held in July of 1961. Our resistance was essentially of an "orthodox" character - we knew that the current line of the SWP leadership bore no relationship whatsoever to Trotsky's teachings and we devoted our efforts to saying so. However, we were also becoming aware that we had another responsibility - the development of an alternative analysis of the events of the post-war world to the Pabloism taken up by the SWP leadership. It was really only after the 1961 convention that we were able to devote much attention to this problem.

In the summer of 1961 I wrote a preliminary draft document on the nature of the Cuban state and the theoretical implications flowing therefrom. The first discussions of this document immediately convinced me that I was utterly and totally on the wrong track. Like the SWP leadership itself I was simply throwing together scraps of theory to "explain" an impression of reality in Cuba and to justify a political conclusion - one of course far more critical of the Cuban leadership than that of the SWP majority. If I was to get to first base in understanding Cuba it became clear that I had to fit Cuba into a general theoretical understanding of postwar developments as a whole. Thus first I had to wrestle with the theoretical problems raised by East Europe, Yugoslavia and China before I could expect to get anywhere on more current developments. Ironically, the more I reached an understanding of these events the less I found them related to Cuba. So a document, which started out as an analysis of Cuba, does not even deal directly with that question. We are issuing an analysis

of Cuba separately.

Particular credit must go to Shane Mage who at the time was in our political tendency for his merciless critique of my theoretical hodge-podge on Cuba and for his general suggestion as to the direction one should look for a solution to the theoretical problems vexing the movement. It was Shane Mage who first suggested the conception of structural assimilation may be the clue not only to any understanding of East Europe but also of Yugoslavia and China as well.

In the Fall of 1961 I did the basic research on East European developments and began to search through the old discussions in the early post-war years of the Fourth International. By early 1962 a basic draft of the section on Eastern Europe was completed. Then work was interrupted in order to produce some material for the June 1962 National Committee Plenum of the SWP. In late 1962 I once again found time to work on the project and wrote the section on Yugoslavia and some of the material on the theoretical controversy within the Fourth International. This work was again interrupted by the pressures of the SWP discussion preparing for the 1963 Convention. In August and September of 1963 I completed the theoretical section of the document, added the Chinese section and the concluding section, and did a basic editing job on the whole project. The document was then submitted to our political tendency for discussion. The document as it appears now is essentially as it was when I completed it in September 1963. Only some minor editing has been done since that time.

As the work on this document progressed our tendency became more and more aware of the extreme importance of an understanding of the Marxist method for the theoretical development of the movement. We also deepened in our conviction that without theoretical development a movement cannot survive. This, in essence, was the lesson we have learned from the sad story of the destruction of the SWP as a revolutionary instrument. We did not come to a realization of this all by ourselves. Our close collaborators, the comrades of the Socialist Labour League of Great Britain, are primarily responsible for helping us learn this. We are extremely indebted to them for this. It is our hope that what we have learned of the Marxist method permeates every section of this document.

The three years since the basic conceptions in the document were worked out have offered ample evidence of the correctness of our analysis. In 1961 every empirical sign seemed to point to the almost total seizure of Cuba by the Stalinists. Everywhere in the country the Stalinists seemed on the ascendance while Cuba and the USSR developed ever closer relations. But soon came the Escalante Affair and the reassertion of control of the Cuban state by the petty bourgeois group around Fidel Castro. This was followed by the Cuban Missile Crisis during which the USSR backed down recognising US hegemony over the Caribbean and showing how far Cuba

really was from meaningful incorporation into the Soviet Camp and how little it could rely on the Kremlin for protection.

In 1961 Guinea was seen by many in the SWP as the next Cuba thus proving that this new deformed revolutionary process was spreading across the globe. By 1962 Guinea had made its peace with imperialism but this time Algeria was the latest example of the "Cuban Way" in action. The Algerians soon outlawed the Communist Party and became ever more deeply entangled in imperialist relations with France and the US, showing how distant they were from being a "workers' state" of any kind. Early this year some utter fools thought Zanzibar would be the latest Cuba but that particular bubble burst almost simultaneous with its appearance.

It is now far easier to see that it was in 1961 that the limits of the expansion of Stalinism were essentially reached with the victory of the Chinese Revolution, that this expansion was essentially defensive in nature not going beyond buffer areas on the USSR's Eastern and Western frontiers, and that these buffers themselves were becoming less and less of an effective defense mechanism for the USSR.

Today almost every day the newspapers give us further evidence of the correctness of Trotsky's thesis that the degenerated workers state is essentially a retreat back towards capitalism and that, within this state, capitalist restorationist forces will grow ever stronger and more powerful unless the current bureaucracy is replaced by a genuine workers' regime. Capitalist competitive measures are being introduced into industry throughout eastern Europe and the USSR. Great concessions are being made to the peasantry in all these countries. Trade relations between these countries and the capitalist world are on the increase. The East European countries are developing an independence from the Kremlin but only in order to become more dependent on the capitalists. The West European Communist Parties are going over wholesale to their own bourgeoisies, most especially the Italian and French parties. How absurd it looks today to see Stalinism as representing a viable "new class" seeking to conquer the world or a new "distorted" revolutionary force pushing everywhere for social overturns.

Underlying all this, of course, is the growing crisis of capitalism which our impressionists have always failed to see. This crisis is not only reflected in the deepening problems of the major capitalist countries - increased competition, unemployment, labour unrest, etc - but also in the growing crisis in the Soviet Camp which, far from remaining apart from the capitalists, is ever more deeply entwined with them and thus deeply infected by their crisis.

This crisis is, in turn, producing an awakening proletariat and the potentiality to once again build a serious revolutionary working class movement. But a revolutionary movement cannot be built as long as revolutionaries do not understand the very world they live in - as long as

they dream of deformed revolutions being thrown up by non-working class forces.

Those who wish now to build a new revolutionary movement here in the United States and in the rest of the world must begin by understanding this whole post-war world. They must see the expansion of Stalinism as part and parcel of the re-stabilization of capitalism and not as something contradictory to it. They must understand that today as the stability of capitalism is eroded from within, the whole Soviet camp itself is thrown into a deep crisis.

Today is a period of great possibilities and of great dangers. The whole agonizing process of the creation of a great buffer to the East and the West which we describe in detail in this document, has not led to any real security for the USSR. The USSR is more in danger today than in any other period of its existence as the Soviet bloc breaks every which way and the capitalists penetrate into the USSR itself. Today more than ever before the defense of the great conquests of October depend on the struggle of the world proletariat, the one force the Stalinists refuse to look to. The world revolutionary movement can only be built upon a firm proletarian outlook. This document is a theoretical contribution to the development of such an outlook.

T.W., December 9, 1964.

"Marxist thought is *dialectical*; it considers all phenomena in their development, in their transition from one state to another. The thought of the conservative petty bourgeois is *metaphysical*; its conceptions are fixed and immovable, and between phenomena it supposes that there are unbridgeable gaps."

Leon Trotsky *Whither France?*

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

The Russian question has always held a central place in the theoretical work of the revolutionary movement. Most major disputes have at least touched upon this question. To the philistines our preoccupation with this question is but a reflection of our sectarianism, our "sect-like character", our purported lack of roots in the struggles of our own country, etc., etc.

Such philistines will never understand the attention we give this question for they do not view the world as we do. Our essential reason for existence is to lead the working class to power in our own country and internationally. Therefore, the most critical questions to us are precisely those related to the *revolutionary process*, the way in which the working class can come to power. This is essentially what the Russian question is all about. Anything which touches this question touches at the very heart of our movement. We are not dealing here with an abstract sociological discussion which allows us to fix labels to states. We are dealing with the very process by which the working class achieves its dominance over society and begins to reshape the history of mankind.

The degeneration of the Russian Revolution is one of the most complex social processes in the history of man. The extension of the social system existent in the Soviet Union into Eastern Europe and large parts of Asia in the post-war period has been an even more complicated and contradictory development. Our epoch of the decay of the capitalist system and the preliminary beginnings of the birth of a new society is dominated precisely by *transitional* and *contradictory* social processes that can only be understood by a method of thought which can grasp transition, development - that is by *dialectics*.

Every serious dispute over the Russian question in our movement has been caused by a petty bourgeois trend which has been unable to grasp in a dialectical fashion this question. This theoretical failure has led, in time, in every case to a political failure - to an essential desertion from the revolutionary struggle.

Stalinism was to Trotsky a *degenerative* process within a *progressive* social system, the world's first workers' state. Stalinism represented a *partial retrogression* in a *capitalist* direction expressed in the development

of a privileged ruling caste internally and the going over to the side of the bourgeoisie in international politics. Deep as this retrogressive process was, it had not yet reached the point of completely negating the original conquests of October. What was *new and different* in Soviet society was a result of its origins in a proletarian revolution - primarily its new property forms and all that flowed from these. What was *old and rotten* in Soviet society was the result of the retreat of the workers' state in a bourgeois direction - the bureaucracy with its bourgeois way of living and its international policy of defense of the status quo.

This essential *Trotskyist* way of seeing Stalinism within the total process of the social revolution in our epoch may seem so simple, so commonplace in our movement that we are wasting our effort repeating it here. But it is precisely these fundamentals that have been under fire almost from the moment Trotsky formulated them. If anything, these fundamentals are less secure in our movement today than at any time in our past history.

The Shachtmanites were the first in our movement to really seriously challenge Trotsky's approach. The Shachtmanites evolved a view of Stalinism which was actually the exact opposite of Trotsky's. What Trotsky considered *old*, essentially *bourgeois* in character - the privileged bureaucracy - Shachtman considered to be *new*, to be a new social class. Stalinism thus rather than being a *retrogressive* trend within a progressive social system become *historically progress* in its own right (even though reactionary in Shachtman's view). What Trotsky viewed as a short, transitional episode in the total revolutionary struggle became with Shachtman a new world order which more and more began to dominate mankind's future.

That Shachtman rejected this new "social class", refused to defend the Soviet Union, and finally ended up in the camp of the bourgeoisie is, of course, of extreme political importance. However, from a *methodological* point of view, the most essential feature of Shachtmanism was its failure to see Stalinism as a retrogressive, transitional development. Stalinism was rather given a *revolutionary* (even though Shachtman inconsistently rejected this revolution) *expansionist* character. The logic of Shachtman's theoretical position was for the Stalinist bureaucracy to *replace* the working class as *the* revolutionary factor in modern history, as the social formation which would create the society that replaces decaying capitalism. The theoretical history of the Shachtmanite movement is essentially a history of a progressively more and more feeble attempt to resist the logic of their own theoretical position and maintain - if only in words - some role for the working class.

Shachtman's long journey away from Trotskyism began with an abandonment of the *dialectical method*. It was for this reason that in the 1940 fight Trotsky insisted on making a discussion of dialectics central.

Shachtman abandoned any attempt to understand Stalinism as a process, to see it within the framework of the total *development* of social phenomena in the epoch of imperialist decay. Rather Shachtman reacted to Stalinism as it *appeared at the moment*. He then projected this momentary view into the indefinite future. To the petty bourgeois metaphysician, the *current trend, the surface movement* is all that can be comprehended. The Stalinists in the late 1930s had physically destroyed the old revolutionists during the Moscow trials. They followed this up by invading Finland and dividing up Poland with the Nazis. Surely it *appeared* as if a new class had consolidated itself in the USSR and now was reaching out to conquer new territories.

Post war developments, at first, gave a big boost to the impressionists. Stalinism expanded its rule throughout Eastern Europe and Stalinist-led movements conquered in China and in North Vietnam. Had not Burnham's wildest theorising come to life? Was not a new bureaucratic ruling class reaching out to remake the world along the lines of Orwell's 1984? Certainly Trotsky's assessment of Stalinism as *retrogressive, conservative, counter-revolutionary* seemed unreal, maybe even quaint. A brilliant man, yes, but he has been outdated by the "New World Reality". Many Trotskyists followed Shachtman's path out of the movement with this sort of outlook in the late forties. But the *method* of Shachtman was to cut even deeper into our movement in another guise — in a theoretical view which on the surface appeared to be the very opposite of Shachtmanism — *Pabloism*.

Pablo also saw in Stalinism an *expanding revolutionary* force which would dominate mankind's future for "centuries". Like Shachtman that aspect of Trotsky's analysis which emphasised the retrogressive *bourgeois* character of Stalinism was rejected, cut off, and the current surface dominance of the Stalinists over a third of the earth was seen as proof enough of the potentialities of Stalinism as an expanding, progressive revolutionary force.

Of course Pablo differed *politically* with Shachtman in that he identified with Stalinism while Shachtman rejected it and thus was forced in time to identify with capitalism. But both viewed the world in the same essential way and neither saw any real role for the *working class* in the revolutionary process. Both Shachtmanism and Pabloism represent metaphysical, non-dialectical, petty bourgeois trends that have developed within our movement. Starting with an alien method, both lead to an alienation from the working class itself, both lead away from Trotskyism.

There has been a third theoretical trend in our movement in the post-war period. This trend has sought, many times in only a weak and partial way, to apply to the post-war world the outlook and the method of Trotsky, of Marxism. This trend has sought to maintain, under the difficult conditions of the postwar period, that Stalinism *remains* counter-

revolutionary, that the only really revolutionary force in the modern epoch is *still* the proletariat, that only our world party is really *capable* of leading the proletariat to power.

This present project bases itself upon this Trotskyist trend. It is our firm conviction that Trotsky's fundamental outlook has been vindicated by the events of the postwar world – if only one really understands those events. There is no need for “new theories”, which close examination will reveal to be nothing more than rehashes of the “pioneer” work of Bruno R., Burnham and Shachtman. There is, however, a deep need to return to Trotsky and to Trotsky's essential theoretical outlook not as a dogma but as a living, developing theoretical system.

We are *absolutely convinced* that Stalinism represents a *retrogressive bourgeois* trend within a progressive social system, that its politics are *completely counter-revolutionary* internally and internationally, that it has *no future whatsoever*. We are just as convinced that the working class will come to power *only* through proletarian revolution under the leadership of a Marxist vanguard party and that we are *indispensible* to the creation of such a party.

We are not only convinced of this but we feel that such a view can be consistently supported theoretically even though this has not been done in a thorough way in the whole postwar period. This project is an attempt to do so. We feel, whatever may be its weaknesses, its essential thrust will be proved by events to be basically correct.

* * * * *

The development of theory, which is essentially an expression of reality, must follow the pattern of events as they occur. To violate this methodological principle leads to total confusion. And this is precisely what has happened to the theoretical work of our movement on the post-war expansion of Stalinism. Before the theoretical problems created by developments in the East European Buffer were fully resolved, the movement turned its attention to the Yugoslav events. Learning nothing from the rude way objective events repudiated our Yugoslav analysis, the same essential approach was applied to China. Today, with this phenomenal potpourri of confused and totally contradictory theories as a base, the movement tries to reach some sort of a theoretical understanding of the Cuban events – not with much success.

There is only one way to make even modest progress under such conditions. We must go back to the beginning and begin patiently piece by piece to properly develop a total theoretical understanding of the role of Stalinism in the postwar world. We must, in condensed fashion, do the job which should have been done systematically during the past fifteen years. So we return to the events in the Buffer and to the discussion

around those events held in the Fourth International between the Second and Third World Congresses.

Once the structural assimilation of the East European buffer is basically understood, and this theoretical analysis consistently embodied in our general theoretical outlook, then we will find it much, much easier to understand the Yugoslav Revolution. The Chinese Revolution, important as it is politically in and of itself, offers little new in the way of a theoretical challenge once the Yugoslav Revolution is understood. With a proper understanding of the structural assimilation of the East European buffer, the Yugoslav Revolution and the Chinese Revolution, we will finally be in a position to properly understand the role of Stalinism in the world today, including its role in Cuba. All this has a very direct and immediate bearing on the theoretical defence of the role of the proletariat as a revolutionary force in its own right and our role in the creation of a new leadership for the class.

It is for these reasons that such a large part of this project is devoted to an explanation of the events of the Buffer. It is necessary to go into these events in a little detail because we are afraid our empirical worshippers of the "facts" always seem to have such a superficial, distorted conception of what the facts actually are. This entire task is made immeasurably easier for us by the passage of close to 15 years since these events took place. It is much, much easier today than it was at the time, to sort out the significant event from the insignificant, to see how the various theoretical outlooks have stood up under the test of events.

PART II – SOVIET POLICY IN THE EAST EUROPEAN BUFFER

Phase One – The Reconstruction of the Bourgeois State Structure 1944–1947

The Strategy of the Kremlin

The events which were to take place in Eastern Europe can only be comprehended if one first understands the situation the Soviet Union faced with the ending of World War II and the fundamental way in which the Soviet bureaucracy sought to preserve itself under these new conditions.

The USSR emerged from World War II as a respected world power with a powerful army which had proven itself. However, the burdens of war, increased tremendously by the policies of the bureaucracy, had severely weakened the entire economic structure of the USSR close to the breaking point. It would be difficult to exaggerate the gravity of the

internal situation Stalin faced in this period. In addition the external situation had much that frightened the bureaucrats. Having succeeded in defeating one imperialist power in alliance with another imperialist power the USSR now faced a united, though temporarily weakened, imperialist opponent which even during the war had exhibited on many occasions its deep hostility to the USSR. Also all over the world the masses were in motion — revolutionary possibilities existed everywhere. To revolutionists this would be a cause for hope, a point of support for the defence of the USSR. To the Kremlin bureaucrats, who had already been forced to loosen slightly their bureaucratic grip on the Soviet people to facilitate the defence of the country, these revolutionary situations were a cause of fear, of worry that they would get “out of control”.

Stalin was, above all else, a “practical” man in the very narrowest empirical sense of the term. In this respect he was a fitting leader of the petty bourgeois bureaucratic stratum which rules the USSR. Ideology was to him always a practical tool, a tool with which he did not feel at home. Stalin’s policies in this (or any) period did not flow, in our opinion, from a false assessment of the “peace-loving” nature of the imperialists he had been collaborating with during the war. Nor was Stalin’s policy shaped by any long term considerations of any kind. Stalin was not a man to think in such terms nor was the bureaucracy he represented interested in such a perspective either. Stalin’s policies in this period were empirically determined to solve the immediate problems facing the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union at the moment.

There is not the slightest indication that the USSR had any real *offensive* or *expansionist* aims in this or any other period. Stalin was seeking rather, in a period in which there was tremendous potential for expanding the revolutionary struggle, simply to defend the bureaucracy which ruled the USSR. For all the talk of “everlasting peace” and the United Nations, Stalin actually relied on a series of very short term deals which he hoped would give himself time to rebuild the USSR into a more defensible position.

The Soviet Union’s fundamental policy was thus to assist the imperialists in restabilising capitalism through most of the world so long as the imperialists in turn would give the USSR time to rebuild the country, to restabilize itself. It is extremely important to note the extent to which the USSR carried through its part of the bargain. The Soviet Union, wherever it had influence, consciously subordinated the working class movement to the restabilization of capitalism. In countries like Greece and French Indochina the local Stalinists were encouraged to allow the imperialists to re-enter their countries after they had been totally liberated by partisan forces. In Italy and France, where an armed and class conscious proletariat existed, the Stalinists channeled this movement behind “all-class patriotic fronts” of one sort or another.

In fact in the early period in Italy the Stalinists tried to foist a monarch on the Italian people. *The whole shape of the postwar world was determined – not so much by the transformations in the Buffer – but rather by a restabilization and growth of capitalism over two-thirds of the world's surface, something that could not have been achieved without the Kremlin's active co-operation.*

The Soviet Union did not rely simply on the promises of the imperialists that it would be left in peace. The bureaucracy would not rely upon the world working class and its revolutionary struggle for its defence nor could it trust the imperialists. It could only rely upon its own military strength – this and nothing else did it trust. Thus was born its policy of the *strategic buffer*. The Soviet Union was to maintain into the immediate postwar period its military and political hegemony over a large East European Buffer as a barrier between the USSR and capitalist Western Europe. Considering the *prostration* of the bourgeoisie after the war – its pre-occupation with its restabilization over a greater portion of the Earth's surface – the imperialists were in no position to do anything but go along with whatever the Kremlin wished to do in this region. In this sense the imperialists never gave anything that they really had to give.

However, Stalin did his best to maintain the capitalist structure of Eastern Europe while at the same time insuring the the area remained friendly to the USSR. The maintenance of capitalist property relations in Eastern Europe served at least four main functions for the Kremlin:

First, by fulfilling his side of the bargain with the imperialists, he could hope that they would give him the time he needed to rebuild the USSR.

Secondly, by saving his cake to eat later so to speak, he had possession of something of value with which to bargain with the imperialists. Thus, he would be able to say that if you prepare a war against the USSR, we will snatch this area from your domain forever by structurally transforming it.

Thirdly, Stalin faced a revolutionary situation in Eastern Europe. To in any way encourage this development was playing with fire right on the borders of the USSR. A successful proletarian revolution on the borders of the USSR would certainly basically shake up the ruling bureaucracy of the USSR which Stalin represented. To allow a genuine, spontaneous revolutionary movement to carry through the socialist revolution and then cynically, openly impose a bureaucracy upon it would be difficult even with Soviet troops and also terribly hurt the prestige of the USSR. However, by insisting that the present stage of the revolutionary movement requires a bloc with the national bourgeoisie allowed the Kremlin to compromise and hold back the revolution until such time as the revolutionary fervour died down and dissipated itself. Thus this

policy allowed the Stalinists to bloc with the national bourgeoisie in these countries in order to co-operate with them in preventing a revolution which in the long run would spell the doom of the Russian bureaucracy itself.

Fourthly, Stalin wished to subordinate the whole region to the needs of rebuilding the USSR. He proceeded to do this through direct removal of whole factories and industrial equipment and through joint stock companies which exploited the resources of even "allied" countries to the advantage of the USSR. Since such is not considered the proper way to treat brother socialist countries he was able to rationalise such a policy easier as long as the countries remained within the capitalist orbit.

Thus, in essence, Soviet policy in the period of 1944-5 to 1947 was aimed at securing this region as a strategic buffer friendly to the USSR but at the same time maintaining capitalist structures within these countries. These two, in the long run contradictory, goals meshed well enough together for the bureaucracy in the early period. However it must be kept in mind that the Soviet bureaucracy sought to maintain capitalism in these areas not because it was a capitalist force which favoured a capitalist social system but rather as a particular bureaucratic way of defending the USSR without risking a genuine proletarian revolution. Therefore, to the extent that maintenance of capitalism began to threaten the defense of the USSR, to that extent the USSR began to move against it. This element, too, was present in Soviet policy from the very beginning though it was not the dominant element. As a result developments during this period seem more confused and contradictory the more intimately one gets to know the events that occurred in each individual country.

Enter the Red Army

As the Red Army advanced through Eastern Europe during 1944 and 1945 it faced little serious resistance. The Nazi occupiers were demoralised and collapsed almost of their own weight. The masses themselves were in open rebellion against the Nazis and in fact succeeded in liberating whole areas and whole countries on their own. The native bourgeoisie played little or no role in these events and did not represent a real organised force. In the former "axis" countries the bourgeoisie was compromised by its collaboration with the Germans who essentially functioned as occupiers in relation to their lesser allies. In the occupied "allied" countries the German occupation itself had done much to undermine the native bourgeoisie as it sought to gear the economy of the occupied country to the military interests of the Germans.

So, with individual variation from country to country, it can be said that the Red Army entered countries in which large sections of the capitalist class had either been destroyed or were in flight; in which the

state administrative structure was either almost non-existent or severely weakened and undermined; and which as a general phenomenon in "allied" as well as "axis" countries, the capitalist class as a social force was weak and discredited. The arrival of the Red Army was greeted everywhere with revolutionary action of the masses who on their own initiative seized large sections of the land and factories. Ernest Germain, the major authority on Soviet developments in the postwar Fourth International described the situation as follows:

"In Czechoslovakia the approach of the Red Army launched a general revolutionary upsurge: occupation of the factories, establishment of plant committees to run the factories, creation of Councils (a kind of Soviet) which gathered into their hands all political authority, concentration of all arms in the hands of the workers' militia . . . In Yugoslavia and Albania the civil war (the struggle between the Chetniks and Partisans) raged from 1942 on. From its very beginning the civil war gave birth to committees of workers and peasants as organisations of power, and to a workers' and peasants' militia.....In Poland, the approach of the Red Army was marked by a succession of clearly revolutionary movements on the part of the working class, while the peasantry, sharply differentiated, maintained a waiting attitude. The workers began by seizing the factories, setting up Councils, introducing workers control, and here or there running the plant themselves.....In Rumania and Bulgaria the approach of the Red Army started a real revolutionary upsurge. August 23 1944 in Rumania and September 9, 1944 in Bulgaria, were marked by gigantic demonstrations of workers followed by an uninterrupted succession of strikes, mass demonstrations, etc., until the Red Army arrived in Bucharest and Sofia.....Finally, in Germany and Austria, the approach of the Red Army unloosed revolutionary movements wherever there was a concentrated proletariat. In Saxony, in the regions of Halle and Magdebourg, in Vienna and even in certain sectors of Berlin, the first reaction of the workers was to occupy the factories, set up plant committees and establish workers control. Red flags were hoisted over most of the factories and in working class housing districts".

Thus capitalism as a social system was seriously eroded in these areas and a deeply revolutionary situation existed. Everywhere a large part of the real power in the country, especially just prior to the entrance of Soviet troops, was in the hands of committees of one sort or another (National Liberation Front, Fatherland Front, etc.). Within these committees, despite the non-working class line imposed on them, the predominant weight of the working class and peasantry was felt. If the Red Army had only protected the area from imperialist interference (they were really too weak to seriously interfere anyway) and tolerated a

revolution, one would have occurred. The result would have been to establish genuine democratic workers' states throughout Eastern Europe - and in fact throughout all of Europe. Had this happened modern history would have taken a fundamentally different course - the scales would have really tipped in favour of revolution and the Soviet bureaucracy itself would not have lasted more than a short while.

This did not happen and for this reason today we face the danger of total annihilation through a nuclear war. The *sole* responsibility for this state of affairs lies with the Kremlin and its *counter-revolutionary* policies. This is the most fundamental lesson that the working class movement must learn, re-learn and re-learn again from post-war European history.

Cohabitation with the Bourgeoisie

Reconstructing a capitalist structure which had pretty well disintegrated and dissipating a revolutionary movement of considerable proportions (both factors varied from country to country) were not easy things to achieve. To make it even more difficult, the USSR sought to do both on the basis of indigenous social forces and to rely on direct intervention of the Soviet Army as little as possible. To do otherwise would have been extremely costly both in the numbers of troops involved and in the social and political cost to the Soviet bureaucracy and its domestic agents. Even bourgeois professors (2) have admitted that direct Russian interference through the Red Army and in other ways (GPU) was much less in this early period than during the second stage of structural assimilation.

Key to the whole process politically as well as socially was the formation in every country of coalition governments with legitimate representatives of bourgeois parties (usually peasant parties) as the political leadership of what was called the "Peoples' Democracies". This was no simple task for in many countries it required the recreation of bourgeois parties which had ceased to exist during the war. In fact in some countries the Communist Party itself had to be created anew (especially in Poland). But the domestic agents of the Kremlin actually helped to organize these parties which were to become organizational centres for capitalist forces in the respective country. In fact Hugh Seton-Watson reports on Hungary: "In the first months it is a curious paradox that the reconstitution of these parties was largely the work of teams of communist agitators who travelled around in Red Army vehicles". (3) We are speaking here not of some sort of phony political entities as were created in some of the countries at a later date but actual bourgeois parties - in this case led by such bourgeois politicians as Ferenc Nagy and Bela Kovacs! This shows so clearly the counter-revolutionary nature of Stalinism. In Yugoslavia, where civil war had generally wiped out the domestic bourgeoisie,

capitalist politicians were imported from exile in the United States to serve in the coalition government.

This was no mere episode or accidental excess on the part of the Stalinists. It was a conscious, worked out policy whose aim was to provide the governmental form of the reconstruction of the capitalist state apparatus in these countries. The consciousness with which this was carried out can be gathered from the following statement of Gottwald to a confidential meeting of the Czech CP functionaries in May 1945: "We must continually remind ourselves that in the present phase, we are following the line of the national and democratic.....and not the line of the social revolution." (4)

These coalition governments were genuine coalitions with real, and important bourgeois forces. The capitalists later claimed it was all a facade for the Stalinist seizure of power but this claim did not quite jibe with their screeches when the Stalinists finally did move on their agents in these governments and their political organisations. All the more important was this development since in most of these countries (we except only Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Albania) these bourgeois parties would have been majority parties if free elections were actually held. In fact in Hungary, where free elections were held, the capitalist Small Farmers Party got 57% of the vote and the CP only 17%. Before these countries could be later sovietised it was necessary to liquidate the leaders of these bourgeois parties, and to destroy the parties themselves.

The State Administrative Structures

The social structures of these countries varied considerably. Generally the countries which had been "axis" powers had their state apparatus more intact because they signed separate peace treaties and went over as a whole to the allied side. Thus both Rumania and Bulgaria not only maintained their old state structures but actually were monarchies through a good part of this period. In fact as late as November 8, 1946 the Rumanian Stalinist daily wished the king "a long life, good health, and a reign rich in democratic achievements." (5)

Hungary had perhaps the most intact state apparatus. Of those that had been allies, both Poland and Yugoslavia-Albania had virtually no old state apparatus left. In Yugoslavia-Albania it was due to civil war while in Poland it was due to the actions of the Germans who treated Poland perhaps worse than any other occupied country (for, because Germany had annexed so much Polish territory, it feared a revived Poland after the war). Czechoslovakia was similar to Poland but not as complete a destruction took place, especially in the Slovak section which had been an Axis power.

Germain aptly described this general process in 1946:

"The *bourgeois* character of the state flows from the capitalist nature of the relations of production, and is expressed in a special kind of state structure. This structure (hierarchical and centralised administration, apparatus of repression, etc.) is preserved everywhere, with the same officials still functioning since the 'purge' touched only the smallest fraction of them. The only exception is Yugoslavia, and to a lesser degree Poland. In these countries the people who made up the former state apparatus have almost completely disappeared, as a result of certain historical factors. Further proof of the bourgeois character of the state is the fact that the new state apparatus makes use of roughly the same structure as the previous apparatus did."

Here we have a picture of the whole complex process. In some states the old administration survives intact; in others it was almost totally destroyed and is reconstituted on the *old* model from scratch. Considering the future theories based on the creation of "new" state apparatuses, it is important to understand at this point that the same essential *type* of state apparatus existed in all these countries despite their diversity as to *origin* of the apparatus. To the extent that Yugoslavia was to evolve differently in the future it was not due to differences in state apparatus. No one in this early period could find *any* basis for claiming that the Yugoslav state, or for that matter the Polish state, was more "working class" than the Bulgarian state or the Czech state.

These states were created through a *process of subordination* of the popular local committees which, depending on their indigenous roots from country to country, represented an element of *dual power* in the early period of "liberation". It is this process which Germain refers to in the case of Yugoslavia where these local committees were the most highly developed. Thus the bourgeois state apparatuses were reconstituted through a process of the subordination and eventual destruction of those institutions which represented the *potential* of a future democratic workers' state apparatus.

We do not wish to give the impression that these states were "healthy" or "normal" bourgeois states. The state apparatuses were reconstituted under conditions of mass upheaval and by a power which, while it might find it temporarily useful to support the bourgeoisie in the area, could not be considered a trustworthy ally of the bourgeoisie because of the class nature of the state upon which it rested. Therefore, as Germain mentions in the above quote, almost from the first, extensive purges took place removing from the state apparatus those elements considered *unreliable* by the USSR and its agents. Considering the role of the bourgeoisie in these countries during the war, many of the most trusted agents of the bourgeoisie were purged from the state apparatus as collaborators with the

Nazis. In their place were put people who either were Stalinists or who understood that they were beholden to the Stalinists.

This was especially true in the army and police sector of the state for Stalin was above all concerned with the preservation of the region as a strategic buffer incapable of being a base for an offensive against the USSR. Being a practical man, he figured that as long as he had pretty good control of the repressive apparatuses of these states and as long as the Red Army was there in the background for possible use, he had control of the situation. Thus while carrying through a very real policy of reconstruction of the bourgeois state in this region, he never fully trusted the bourgeoisie he was reconstructing nor the international capitalist forces which he realised stood not that far behind them.

Eugene Varga, one of Stalin's chief theoreticians of the period, characterized the states as follows in 1947, when the purging process had gone much farther than in the earlier period and when in fact the transition to the drive towards structural transformation was beginning:

The social structure of these states differs from all those hitherto known to us; it is something totally new in the history of mankind. It is neither a bourgeois dictatorship nor a proletarian dictatorship. The old state apparatus has not been smashed, as in the Soviet Union, but reorganized by means of a continuous inclusion in it of the supporters of the new regime. (7)

Interestingly he left out of his list of states of this type Rumania, Hungary, and, of course, East Germany. Martin Horvath, as a Hungarian where the structural assimilation process began later and where the old state apparatus was preserved for longer, characterized the state as not having gone beyond capitalist bounds: "In view of the fact that a People's Democracy does not destroy the right to own the means of production, it can simply be regarded as the most progressive form of bourgeois democracy (or, to put it more correctly, its only progressive form)." (8) On the other extreme Tito after the breakup of his early coalition government, characterized the People's Democracy as a variant of the dictatorship of the proletariat — as different in form and not in content with the Russian State. This theoretical diversity, which reflected the actual differences between the pace of developments in the different states, was never really worked out by the Stalinists as by the time the theoretical dispute was raised it was resolved by the actual drive towards the structural transformation of the region as a whole.

The Nationalizations

Nationalisation also occurred on an uneven pattern. Here it is important to realize that nationalization was simply forced upon the Stalinists

because of a combination of the fact that many of the factories in this whole area were owned by the Germans and that in addition many factories were simply seized by the workers. Therefore in many cases the state nationalized a factory in order to take it out of the hands of the workers and sometimes even put the old capitalist owners back in as "managers". It is also important to realize that the state administering these nationalized factories was ruled by a coalition government including bourgeois parties.

In this regard Germain notes, "In Czechoslovakia, the passage by the National Assembly of the nationalizations law was hailed in the bourgeois press as a *victory*. The enterprises passed from the hands of the workers to the hands of the state, which again runs them in the interests of the bourgeois class. In Poland the nationalization decrees explicitly confirmed 'the authority of the director'." (9) In Yugoslavia the bulk of industry was actually seized by the workers upon "liberation" but its status as nationalized property was not recognized until 1947, over a year and a half after it was recognized in Poland and Czechoslovakia. This shows the extent to which expropriation of the bourgeoisie was carried through under the initiative of the masses with the Stalinists acting as a restraining factor recognizing the expropriations only where necessary and in order to suppress workers' control and subordinate the seized property to the central state apparatus.

Despite extensive nationalization private property continued to exist and was openly accepted by all the governments of the region. Poland's Bierut stated: "In the state of People's Democracy there still exist classes which live by exploiting the work of others; these are the capitalists, various entrepreneurs, well-to-do merchants, factory owners employing a certain number of workers, rich peasants, speculators, and other non-workers." (10)

In Poland close to 90% of all industry was nationalized within the first year of "liberation" and Czechoslovakia followed this pattern relatively closely. In Hungary, however, the banks were not nationalized until January, 1948. Interestingly Germain, writing in 1946, quite correctly pointed out that nationalization was on the same level in Finland as it was in Bulgaria and Rumania. Austria was listed as being much more nationalized than any of these three countries. As history was to show both Finland and Austria were to pass into the capitalist orbit definitively while Rumania and Bulgaria were to be transformed into deformed workers' states.

Thus we see that in all these countries the essentials of capitalist social and property relations remained weakened but intact. Capitalist structures survived from country to country through an uneven pattern but it survived. The process of the reconstruction of capitalist structures in Eastern Europe just like the process of structural assimilation which was to

follow must be viewed as a complex one in which political, social, structural and economic factors are intertwined. To separate out a single factor, such as nationalization, or for that matter, political rule, and attempt to understand the changes in the society as a whole simply by noting changes in this single factor is completely misleading and superficial.

FOOTNOTES – PART II

1. Germain, Ernest. "The Soviet Union After the War, *International Information Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Socialist Workers Party, New York) pp. 8, 9.
2. See Zbigniew K. Brzezinski. *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1961) Chapters 1-5.
3. Seton-Watson, Hugh. *The East European Revolution* (Frederick A. Praeger, Inc., New York, 1956) pg. 191. Seton-Watson bases this assertion on direct reports from Ferenc Nagy and Suljok.
4. Brzezinski. *Op cit.* pg. 27
5. *Ibid* pg. 16
6. Germain. *Op cit.* pg 12
7. Daniels, Rovert V. *A Documentary History of Communism, Vol. 2* (Vintage Books, New York, 1962) pg. 152.
8. Brzezinski. *Op cit.* pg. 27
9. Germain. *Op cit.* pg. 11
10. Brzezinski. *Op cit.* pg. 28

PART III – SOVIET POLICY IN THE EAST EUROPEAN BUFFER

Phase Two – The Drive Towards Structural Assimilation 1947-1951

The International Context

One of the most difficult aspects of achieving an understanding of East European events of the post-war period is striking the proper balance between international and domestic factors. On the one hand we have taken trouble to emphasize in the preceding section that the USSR relied essentially on indigenous forces in achieving its goals in Eastern Europe. The Communist Parties based themselves in part on the working classes of their respective countries and with the support of the USSR and implicit threat of action by the Red Army, they were major factors in determining the evolution of these countries. The bourgeois parties that were reconstituted likewise represented legitimate internal forces which were not removed from the scene easily – and certainly not non-violently. On the other hand, in the ultimate sense, it was international considerations which determined the final social evolution of the countries in this region. But for a somewhat different international relationship of forces Yugoslavia could have become Greece or conversely Austria could have followed the pattern of East Germany. The evolution of the buffer zone as a totality was determined basically by the conscious decision of Stalin in reaction to a new international situation. However, in the *implementation* of Stalin's decision, important internal East European forces played the critical role. And further, as Yugoslavia was to illustrate, once the process had developed beyond a certain point it was not necessarily completely controllable by the USSR.

As we noted earlier, Stalin's whole approach to the buffer zone was motivated by an attempt to defend the USSR through the maintenance of a friendly strategic zone at the USSR's borders and a relative state of international stability with capitalism *for a period of time*. Stalin was not interested in epochs or for that matter even in decades. But it is also quite likely that he expected a little longer period of "peaceful co-existence" with the US than the measly two years he got (and they were not very "peaceful" years at that). Therefore the intensive war drive of the imperialist camp which formally opened with Winston Churchill's Fulton, Missouri speech in 1946 caught him off guard and for a period of time he reacted in a cautious and conciliatory fashion hoping that the US capitalists would "come to their senses".

Sometime during the various manoeuvres around the inauguration of the Marshall Plan in 1947, Stalin read the handwriting on the wall and made a sharp turn in the direction of the defensive consolidation of that section of the world still remaining under the direct domination of the USSR. Zhdanov was paraded to the front of the stage, in the USSR and the Stalinist "hards" took over everywhere conducting a drive against any and all signs of even potential opposition. In the buffer zone this meant a coordinated, conscious, directed drive towards the structural transformation of these countries on the model of the USSR. (1)

In September, 1947 at Slarska Poreba, Poland, the first meeting of the Cominform took place attended by all East European Communist Parties with France and Italy thrown in for good measure. The Cominform was organized for the specific purpose of consolidating the quite diverse Communist Parties of Eastern Europe into a monolithic force directly controlled by the USSR to be utilized to transform Eastern Europe into a social system compatible with the USSR's. Its first meeting marks the beginning of the regionally coordinated push in this direction in every country of Eastern Europe. Its last actual meeting was held in 1949 when the essentials of this process had been completed. After that date the role of the Cominform was purely propagandistic, aimed largely against Tito (the organization was formally dissolved several years after it had fallen into disuse, as a gesture of friendliness towards Tito). Because even the most subordinated and controlled international body tends to lessen the weight of the USSR itself in the Stalinist movement by at least formally recognizing that the Soviet party is but one of many, the Stalinists resort to such international bodies only when absolutely necessary and dissolve them as soon as possible.

Zhdanov delivered the International Report to the conference which noted the existence in the world of two camps. The imperialist camp is led by the US which is seeking world supremacy. "But America's aspirations to world supremacy encounter an obstacle in the USSR, the stronghold of anti-imperialist and anti-fascist policy, and its growing international influence, in the new democracies, which have escaped from the control of Britain and American imperialism, and in the workers of all countries, including America itself who do not want a new war for the supremacy of their oppressors." "The vague and deliberately guarded formulations of the Marshall Plan", Zhdanov continues quite accurately, "amount in essence to a scheme to create a bloc of states bound by obligations to the United States . . ." (2)

Around the same time the well-known Stalinist economist Varga presented his thesis that the People's Democracies have passed through the bourgeois stage and are in transition to the proletarian stage. These states, he felt, will establish close and friendly relations with the USSR "primarily because the present social order brings them closer to the Soviet Union,

because of all the great powers the Soviet Union alone is interested in the maintenance and further progressive development of the social order and political regime existing in these countries . . ." And above all "the present regime in these countries provides the guarantee that they will not, in the future, again voluntarily serve as a *place d'armes* for any power which tries to attack the Soviet Union . . ." (4)

These theoretical formulations were both assessments of changes which had already taken place in some of these countries and political orders that such changes be initiated in areas that had lagged behind. Behind it all was the decision of the USSR that the maintenance of the buffer zone as a strategic defense area for the USSR demanded the transformation of social relations in these countries so that the countries would be compatible with the USSR.

The diversity that really existed, as well as the direction in which the general drive was headed, was summarized well in a speech in April, 1948 by Colonel Tulpanov, the political officer of the Soviet Military Administration in East Germany: "Yugoslavia has already reached the other bank (a socialist state); Bulgaria is taking the last few strokes to reach it; Poland and Czechoslovakia are about in the middle of the river followed by Rumania and Hungary, which have gone about a third of the way; while the Soviet Occupation Zone has just taken the first few strokes from the bourgeois bank." (5) Thus with the formation of the Cominform began an intensive drive to structurally transform all the countries of Eastern Europe after the model of the USSR – to reach the "other bank".

The Destruction of the Political and Social Power of the Bourgeoisie

While the tempo of development varied from country to country in Eastern Europe the *process* within each country, and over a period of time within the region as a whole, was an identical one. It is the understanding of this process, which we call structural assimilation, with a Marxist method and the integrating of this understanding into our general theory of Stalinism which is the real challenge before us.

Essentially this process was composed of three interrelated developments: 1) the completion of the destruction of the basic political, social and economic hold of the bourgeoisie; 2) the consolidation of a monolithic Stalinist party; and 3) the interpenetration of the state apparatus of the party. Elements of all three developments can be traced back to the very beginning of the postwar evolution of these states. Thus, as we have noted earlier, the bourgeoisie survived in these states in only a weakened, emasculated form. The process of the construction of Stalinist

parties and their increasing dominance over the political life of these countries also commenced with the entry of the Red Army into the respective country. The reconstituted bourgeois states had, in the very process of their being reconstituted, been penetrated by elements subservient to the Stalinists, especially in the repressive arms of the state.

The direct economic power of the bourgeois class in Eastern Europe had been basically eroded with the nationalizations which followed the war. Its social power resided mainly in the peasantry, which had been transformed into a viable petty bourgeois force by the land reforms, in the middle urban classes who controlled a large section of retail and wholesale trade, and in the state administration. This very real social power found political expression primarily in the petty bourgeois peasant parties that were in most countries the real majority parties, and also partially in the social democratic parties and even in the Communist parties. The formation of genuine coalition governments including the peasant and social democratic parties legitimized their role in society and played the role of limiting social transformations in the country to those acceptable to the bourgeois forces within these parties. *Thus the political expression of this bourgeois social stratum was of extreme importance to the bourgeoisie precisely because of the very real social weakness of the bourgeoisie in these countries.* Therefore the breakup of the coalition governments, the destruction of the peasant parties, and the fusion of the social democratic with the Communist parties played a far greater role in the destruction of the social power of the bourgeoisie in these countries than transformations in the political superstructure usually do.

The general pattern that this process followed began with the harassment of the peasant party even while it remained in the government coalition. This was done when it was recognized that this party had the support of the majority of the population. At the beginning, this process was relatively easy for the Stalinists and even supported by many workers and poor peasants. These parties had become refuges for all sorts of compromised bourgeois elements and further had certain ties with the Western capitalist countries (even if not always of the direct "paid agent" sort the Stalinists accused them of). Therefore, with the exception of Czechoslovakia and for a short period Hungary, these parties lived a half legal, half illegal existence during the bulk of the period prior to their total liquidation.

The significant dates in this process usually relate to the flight from the country or the jailing and trial of the leading figure of the peasant party. There usually followed a period in which the peasant party had been effectively destroyed or transformed into a docile instrument of the Stalinists. In Poland it was the flight of Mikolajczyk from the country and with it the destruction of the Polish People's Party as an independent organization. In Hungary the main back of the bourgeois opposition was

broken with the arrest of Bela Kovacs, leader of the Small Holders Party in early 1947 and the flight of Ferenc Nagy in March of 1947. However, the process was not completed until the jailing of Cardinal Mindzenty, a man with a truly feudal mind, in December of 1948. The dates for Bulgaria and Rumania fall within this general period.

One exception to the pattern should be mentioned at this point — Czechoslovakia. Here the bourgeois parties functioned with virtually complete freedom until 1948. The CP was the largest party in the country, as we have noted earlier, because of the genuine support it received from the working class. In February of 1948 the CP came to power through a combination of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action which involved real mobilizations of the working class. Following the seizure of power an intensified drive took place against the bourgeois parties and they were effectively destroyed in a few short months.

It is important to emphasize here that this process did not result in most cases in a formal resumption of rule by a single party. Rather rump coalitions continued of parties that were essentially tools of the Stalinists. The very real process that occurred was the destruction of the independent political arm of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces in the country. This was accompanied by the wholesale jailings of the effective leaders and political cadres of these parties and all those suspected of being their agents within the state administration. Thus this political process seriously pruned back the social power of the bourgeois elements by effectively eliminating their direct voice within the political superstructure. This process, *by itself*, would have no more destroyed the real social rule of the bourgeoisie than the nationalization of an earlier period had done.

This political process received its formal codification in the adoption of new constitutions in these countries modelled directly after the USSR's. While in and of itself a constitution is not a fundamental thing, there is no doubt that a basic juridical codification is an important indicator of the state of social relations in a country. It was in that spirit that Trotsky analyzed the new Soviet Constitution in 1936. Yugoslavia was way ahead of the pack with a new constitution in 1946. Bulgaria led the new drive adopting its constitution on November 4, 1947. Interestingly, this constitution represented a major change from an earlier one passed only in May of that year.

Between May and November the first meeting of the Cominform was held. Rumania followed on April 13, 1948; Czechoslovakia on May 9, 1948; Hungary on August 20, 1949; and Poland dragged behind waiting to July 22, 1952.

The completion of the destruction of the economic underpinnings of the bourgeois forces in these countries did not represent such a drastic change as the destruction of their political power. In most of these countries, by 1947, the commanding heights of industry were in the hands

of the state. Thus the critical question was in whose hands the state was rather than the mopping up operation on the remains of private capitalist holdings. Still this period marked a renewed nationalization drive in those countries which still had substantial private capitalist operations. (6) More significant were steps taken to destroy the social power of the petty bourgeois classes. These included the virtual take over of wholesale trade and the takeover of a large section of retail trade. Also a drive towards forced collectivization was begun during the latter part of this period. Its aim was both to support the industrialization efforts of the country and to place the peasantry directly under state control.

Above all the essential process in the economic field was the beginnings of a real planification of the economy, the drive towards an intensive build up of heavy industry, and a further reorientation of international trade away from the West into bilateral trading with the USSR. (7) The dating of the beginning of the Five-Year plans in the respective countries gives an indication of completion of the basic phases of this process: Bulgaria: 1949-53; Czechoslovakia: 1949-1953; Hungary: 1950-1954; Poland: 1950-1955; Rumania: 1951-1955; East Germany: 1951-1955.

The Consolidation of the Monolithic Party

The process of consolidating the monolithic party and the interpenetration of this party with the state apparatus was obviously a closely interrelated political and social process. Further, it was carried on simultaneously with the destruction of the bourgeois parties and the purging of their agents, or potential agents, within the state apparatus. Taken together the process is essentially one of *social* revolution – the destruction of the remnants of power of one ruling class and its replacement by a social stratum which at bottom represented the historic interests of another class – the working class – though to be sure in a highly distorted fashion.

The nature of the Communist Party varied greatly from country to country. Some like the Polish party were strictly postwar creations even though the basic cadres were from the pre-war party. Others, like the Czech, Bulgarian and Yugoslav parties, had been real forces in their respective countries before “liberation”, had solid roots in the working class, and a developed indigenous political leadership. All these parties experienced a very large growth immediately following the war – a growth primarily due to an influx of careerist elements but also partially a reflection of the leftward movement of the working classes. Even the worst, most subservient to Moscow of them, had a certain mass base in the working class of their own country.

The leadership of the parties varied as to its origins though generally it was produced by three "schools" which had some bearing on its future evolution. Some of the leaders had been in the resistance movements during the war and thus had a greater base of support in their own party and in their own country — Tito is the best though by no means a typical example of this type of leader. Others were trained in the International Brigades in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. There, of course, they went through the Stalinist GPU school of functioning but still they emerged with a somewhat different outlook from the third group — the direct "Moscow men" who spent the war in the USSR as a paid part of the USSR's international staff. These men were to rise to power in most of the East European countries in the latter part of this period.

Two central aspects of the process of creating the monolithic party are the purging of the CPs and the forced unification of the CPs with the social democratic parties. The purging process in the East European parties was of a scope rivalled only by the Moscow Trials period in the USSR. The figures speak for themselves: 370,000 were purged from the Polish party; 550,000 from the Czech party; Rumania — 200,000; Hungary: 200,000; East Germany: 300,000 and Bulgaria, 90,000. The purposes of the purges were several. In the first place they were aimed at removing from the party all elements potentially likely to function as agents of those social classes that were being forcefully removed from power in these countries. This step was necessary because the essentially class collaborationist policies of the earlier period had led to many essentially bourgeois elements joining the CPs. A second category were those elements within the CP who might actually or potentially resist the structural transformation policy dictated by the Kremlin — who may have preferred a slower pace. The most important figure who actually had advocated such a policy was Gomulka, and his removal from power in the Polish party in 1948-49 was an important turning point for the development of the whole region. A third, and perhaps most numerous category were those elements within the CP capable of resisting or questioning the course of the CP leadership and its abject subservience to the USSR. This included both those elements who had some roots or connection with the masses themselves (whom, as we shall see, the transformation process was to alienate deeply) and those who represented the interests of the domestic Stalinist party and its bureaucracy and who may have originally pushed for a faster pace of structural transformation. This latter element was best represented in Tito and those Stalinist "hards" who had been closely associated with Zhdanov and Varga (soon to be purged in the USSR). This was the essential political significance of both the Tito break and the Rajk and Slansky trials.

While the purge was quite massive in a country like Poland which had an amorphous CP riddled with petty bourgeois elements, it was especially

violent and brutal in those countries where the CP had deep roots in the class and a relatively independent developed leadership. In Czechoslovakia the purge affected the bulk of the CP and reached deep into the state bureaucracy as well.

The forced unification of the social democratic parties with the CPs was a very important aspect of the creation of the monolithic single party. In the first place it offered the most convenient way for the Stalinists to remove a competing working class party. It would have been much more costly for them politically to have directly suppressed a working class party in the same fashion as they did a bourgeois party. More important, probably, was that, with the extensive purging of the "unreliables" in their own party, they were in need of cadres to man their organisation and the state administration. The social democrats helped them fill this need and thus interestingly gave the world another example of the essential identity of these two political trends. The Stalinists found large sections of the social democratic leaders more reliable personnel for their ruling party than many of their own members who they were forced to purge. The date of the merger of these two parties is another indicator of the development of the monolithic party in the respective countries: Rumania, February 23, 1948; Czechoslovakia, June 27, 1948; Bulgaria, August 11, 1948; Poland, December 15, 1948.

Interpenetration of the Monolithic Party with the State Apparatus

From the first days of the Soviet regime the counterweight to bureaucratism was the party. If the bureaucracy managed the state, still the party controlled the bureaucracy. Keenly vigilant lest inequality transcend the limits of what was necessary, the party was always in a state of open or disguised struggle with the bureaucracy. The historic rule of Stalin's faction was to destroy this duplication, subjecting the party to its own officialdom and merging the latter in the officialdom of the state. Thus was created the present totalitarian state.

Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p. 279

The development of the monolithic party was accompanied by the final destruction of the independence of the trade union movement (an important byproduct of the merger with the social democrats) and its subordination to the state; and the intensification of the purging of the state apparatus and its subordination to and interpenetration with the monolithic party. Throughout this period the state bureaucracy grew by leaps and bounds. In most East European countries figures show at least a doubling in the size of the state administration alone not to

mention the party bureaucracy, the trade unions, collective farms, etc., in the post war period over the pre-war period. (8)

Of course these social transformations led to important structural transformations in the state itself. The most important of these was the growth of the National Planning Board and the subordination and reorganization of other governmental departments to fit the needs of administering a planned economy where the essential economic decisions are made by the state. However these structural changes were not *fundamental* and the resultant state in *form* was not that different from Mussolini's quite capitalist corporate state. Both Mussolini's state and the East European states were fundamentally different in *form* from the soviet-type of the early period of the USSR or the Paris Commune. In *class content*, however, the East European states are in the same class camp with the early soviet-type state and not with the Mussolini type state. This contradiction between form and content is one of the fundamental contradictions of the degenerated or deformed workers states.

This difference in content flowed not from the formal state structure in these countries but from the control over the state apparatus by the apparatus of the Stalinist party. The Stalinist party, in turn, was not a capitalist party. It had legitimate roots in the working class of its own country and, to the extent that it was independent of its own working class, it was dependent upon – and fundamentally an extension of – the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union. This bureaucracy in turn rested upon the foundations of a workers state and thus was capable of moving independently of and against the capitalist class. It was through this process that the East European states became subordinated to the working class, even though in a distorted Stalinist form.

It is important that we do not slide quickly over a basic aspect of this process which presents certain difficult problems for us theoretically. The process of the structural transformation of the East European states was carried through by a deep purging of the state apparatus, its interpenetration with the party apparatus, and significant though not fundamental changes in its formal organization. It was *not* carried through by the *destruction* of the old bourgeois state apparatus in its entirety and the *erection* of a new working class state apparatus. Not only has much of the formal administrative structure been kept intact *to this day* but a good section of the personnel of the old state administration has been maintained. Thus when the West Germans published figures on the number of former Nazis in the East German state apparatus they are not lying (needless to say neither are the East Germans when they do the same on West Germany) nor is the situation in East Germany that much different from the rest of East Europe.

Of course there were quite significant changes in the overall *weight* of

social forces within the state administration. Generally the top posts in the apparatus went to CP reliables. On the bottom layers, substantial numbers of workers were brought up into the apparatus. It is in the middle administrative layers that the old personnel survives to this day — many sporting their CP membership cards.

The Relative Weight of the USSR and Domestic Forces

The process of structural assimilation was carried through in every country in Eastern Europe by the *combined* efforts of internal forces and the external role of the USSR. The relative weight of external and internal forces varied from country to country depending on the indigenous strength of the Stalinist movement in the particular country and its relative reliability in the eyes of the Kremlin.

Looking at the process as a whole in East Europe, the inauguration of the drive toward structural transformation was marked by a real increase in the direct intervention of the USSR into the affairs of the East European countries. Throughout the period of the coalition regimes the USSR played a backseat role in the political affairs of the country intervening as a preventative measure only when it felt absolutely compelled to do so. From 1947 on, the intervention of the USSR into the internal affairs of the East European countries became a general rule and this intervention was not far beneath the surface.

As the Yugoslav break was to prove, the agents of the GPU functioned throughout the East European countries in a completely autonomous fashion free to arrest nationals without even consulting national authorities. The Soviet ambassadors played an important role in directing the internal affairs of the countries they were stationed in and the judgements of various national CP leaders had a direct bearing on their careers (much of this is revealed in Imre Nagy's writings as well as in the Tito business). This was supplemented by a constant interchange of Soviet "advisors" and by frequent trips of the CP leadership of a particular country to the USSR. In addition more direct coercive influence existed in the form of the actual penetration of the state institutions of many East European countries by Soviet personnel. This was especially true of the secret police and army. Finally behind it all stood the Soviet army. That this could very well be a decisive factor in these conditions was illustrated by the actual events in Hungary.

These political and military ties of the East European countries were reinforced by direct economic dependence on the USSR through a series of bilateral trade agreements. With this sector of Europe more and more cut off from the capitalist west, the individual countries became more and more dependent on the USSR economically. It thus can be said that, as a general pattern, the East European region came to be administered

as if it were actually an integrated part of the USSR itself. In fact, actual incorporation of these countries into the USSR may well have benefitted them by allowing the area to economically be developed on a regional pattern.

However, it would be a big mistake to see the transformation of East Europe as something carried out by the USSR at bayonet point. In reality the direct role of the USSR, while increased over the pre-1947 period, in the main remained that of a supporting factor to the Communist Parties of the respective countries. It was these parties which carried through the actual transformation process. Where the USSR played a more direct role, especially when it actually penetrated the existing state apparatus, it was either because of the unreliability of the domestic CP or because of its inherent weakness.

This domestic CP, however, was no independent force unrelated to the USSR. Rather, in every one of these countries the leadership of the CP was a specially selected body of men trained in the school of Stalinism, completely subservient in their ideology to the USSR regime. *Thus they must be understood theoretically to be essentially extensions of the Soviet bureaucracy itself to which they were more beholden than they were to the working class of their own country or any other class for that matter.* Only by thoroughly understanding the nature of these CPs is it possible to theoretically explain why the *pattern* of development in all the East European countries was so similar and the resulting system so *identical*, even though the *degree* of direct Soviet intervention varied greatly from country to country.

In Balance: The Progressive and Reactionary Features

The more one studies the events in East Europe the more one is amazed at how an essentially progressive process – the destruction of capitalism and the laying of the foundations for a future socialist development – could be carried through in such a fundamentally reactionary manner. While this was quite apparent at the time, it is unquestionable now as we have witnessed the East German Uprising of 1953 and the Hungarian and Polish Revolutions of 1956.

We must call to the attention of the reader the highly significant *time lag* of two years between the massive revolutionary impact of the immediate post war period and the beginning of the drive towards structural transformation. The basic progressive conquests of the workers and peasants in Post War Europe were acquired *by their own efforts* in 1944-1945 only to be partially stolen from them by the Stalinists – who gave them back two years later in such a way as to alienate the workers and peasants from their own conquests. Grotesque as it may sound that is actually what took place.

As we have noted earlier the combination of the action of the masses, the entry of the Red Army, and the previous destruction of war and the Germans, led to a situation in which the "commanding heights" of industry was nationalized in these countries. In addition the old, almost feudalistic landowners were expropriated and a redivision of the land occurred — a profoundly progressive measure in these backward agricultural countries. When it comes to social ownership therefore, the structural transformation process simply completed a process basically finished. Further this process would have been completed two years earlier by the masses themselves if it were not for the intervention of the USSR with its bourgeois coalition policy.

Masses, under Stalinist leadership, or lacking any defined leadership, can thus under certain conditions of the prostration of the capitalist class largely expropriate the major holdings of the capitalist class. However, they are incapable of completing the process of the destruction of the capitalist class and the creation of their own state forms without a conscious revolutionary leadership. The Stalinists, with the support of the USSR, were therefore able to halt the process before its completion and reestablish a weakened but still existent form of bourgeois rule for a short period. In the period following 1947 the Stalinists, acting largely independently of the working class, in a reactionary way carried through the historically progressive task of removing from power the bourgeoisie which had remained in power only because of their own treacherous policies in the previous period. It is in this and *this alone* that lies the progressive content of the Stalinist transformations of the period. And this progressive task they carried through in such a *reactionary manner* as to totally alienate the working class itself so that within seven years of the completion of the main aspects of this process the working class was in *armed revolt* against the Stalinist regime.

As we have mentioned earlier the Red Army entered Eastern Europe with the prestige of the Russian Revolution and USSR's heroic defensive struggle in World War II behind it. Everywhere the Soviet troops were greeted as liberators, as representatives of a new social order. This was true in Nazi occupied "allied" countries as well as former "axis" countries. In the early period this positive image of the USSR was partially dissipated by the way in which the Soviet troops and the USSR treated the people in the territories under its control. The former "axis" countries were subjected to *barbaric* treatment of an almost unbelievable scope aimed not simply at the collaborators with the Nazis but against the population as a whole including the working class. (9) This was the result of Stalin's reactionary policy of utilizing such base passions as national hatred and chauvinism of the crudest forms to mobilize the Soviet people. In addition the USSR economically drained the buffer area in order to build up its own economy. While this draining operation was most intensive in the

"axis" countries where it was excused as "reparations", it was also present in the "allied" countries as the Yugoslavs so eloquently later testified. In addition, as we have noted, the USSR carried on a conscious policy aimed at dissipating the revolutionary energies of the working class and peasantry to prevent the working class from coming to power.

These policies of the USSR did much to undercut the positive impact of the Red Army's liberation and by 1947 led to a certain amount of popular support being given to petty bourgeois oppositional figures even by a section of the working class and the poorer peasants. Still there remained a certain degree of goodwill among the workers and peasants in several of these countries for the USSR and some genuine support for the CPs. This goodwill was to be completely and utterly dissipated during the period of the structural transformation of these countries, a process in which the working class played almost no role at all.

While there was support for the steps taken by the Stalinists against the petty bourgeois parties among many advanced workers (especially in Czechoslovakia), this was undercut by the fact that the moves against the bourgeois forces were accompanied by an increase of police terror against the working class as well. This was the period of the great purges, of the opening of literally hundreds of concentration camps, of the development of uncontrolled, privileged and rapacious bureaucracy which dominated every section of life in these countries and usurped the remnants of genuine working class organization and influence in the country at large and within the CP itself.

While workers supported the final wiping out of the remnants of private enterprise within these countries, this was accompanied by an intensive heavy industrialization drive which *lowered* the real wages of the working class way below the not too high level they had been at during the early post-war period. As the workers saw their own economic lot deteriorate they could not help but notice the growing economic privileges of the new bureaucracy.

While the poor peasants generally supported the moves of the state against the Kulak element in the countryside these progressive moves were shortly followed by forced collectivization drives which alienated the great bulk of the peasantry. While some among the intellectuals benefitted from the transformations by becoming incorporated into the privileged bureaucracy itself, the intellectuals found their new privileges were accompanied by police state regulation of the intellectual and cultural field so that the best of them became thoroughly alienated from the Stalinist state.

So we see that virtually every section of the population, except those directly benefitting from the privileges the bureaucracy possessed (and even some of them) were alienated for good and progressive reasons from the Stalinist regimes in these countries who were forced to rule more and

more directly by means of police state terror and the threat of Soviet intervention. In the course of this process the national aspirations of this region, with its many nationalities and its centuries of subjugation to chauvinist powers, were trampled upon. Thus the structural transformation process was accompanied by a *growth* in nationalist feelings among the masses which could only strengthen reactionary influences among the peasantry and even the working class.

At every point Soviet policy in East Europe was motivated by a deep going fear of Stalin's that the incorporation of this region into the Soviet bloc might lead to *internal* resistance and opposition to the ruling Soviet bureaucracy and its agents throughout the region. This explains the extremely reactionary way in which this process was carried out and why it was accompanied by a purging of all those elements within the Stalinist parties which might have possibly resisted the Soviet bureaucracy — if only in the interests of the bureaucratic stratum in their own country.

This can be seen in the grotesque policy followed under Stalin towards the economic development of the region. During the early post war period, Tito and Dimitrov had pursued a policy of a proposed Balkan Federation whose aim it was to link together in a loose way all the countries of the buffer. As long as the East European region remained within the capitalist orbit, Stalin encouraged this policy and its first steps were worked out by the coordinated activities of the Bulgarians and the Yugoslavs. In addition other countries of the Buffer established friendly relations with each other. However, as soon as Stalin started on his drive of structural transformation this progressive project was immediately dropped. Each country in the region was kept separate from each other country and its sole political, social and economic ties were directly to the USSR. The relations between one country and another in the region always went through the USSR. Even diplomatic dealings and treaties were bilateral rather than multilateral.

This had a terribly harmful effect on the economies of the East European countries. Each country had to attempt to develop itself on an *autarchic* pattern and further, regardless of local conditions, each country had to emulate the development of the USSR in the 30's and thus emphasize heavy industry and forced collectivization. Through this process Stalin kept these countries extremely weak and utterly dependent on the USSR, and the USSR *alone*. In addition the ruling Stalinist parties were so thoroughly alienated within their own countries that they were more and more dependent on the USSR for protection from their own masses (remember Hungary). This pattern has only been partially ameliorated in the post-Stalin period and then only because economic catastrophe threatened the complete and utter breakdown of the system in the whole region.

Events in Eastern Europe must have and do have an effect on Western

Europe. Czechoslovakia juts deep into Central Europe; Austria shares a long border with Hungary; Greece is surrounded on all but one side by Stalinist countries; Germany is cut in two. Perhaps the most damning thing that can be said about the social transformations in Eastern Europe is that they had *absolutely no* revolutionary impact on the workers in Western Europe. In fact they had a profound *negative* impact, discrediting the very concept of socialism itself among many, many advanced workers. So we see that the Stalinists carried through a progressive transformation in Eastern Europe in such a way as to deeply alienate the working classes in whose name the transformation took place, both in Eastern and Western Europe.

Structural Assimilation of the Buffer as a Pattern

As the foregoing two sections reveal the pattern of social development in the buffer was fundamentally different from the "normal" pattern of social overturn such as that which led to the victory of October. It is of central importance theoretically to understand thoroughly this pattern and to avoid a distorting or telescoping of events in such a way as to obscure the real process that took place.

Under conditions of the worldwide prostration of capitalism immediately following the war, the Soviet Union, through military means, obtained an essential dominance over a whole region, a dominance the imperialists were in no position to seriously challenge. Thus the USSR could do pretty much what it wished in the region without seriously risking a head-on conflict with imperialism. The developments in the buffer are simply unthinkable if it were not for *both* the existence of the USSR and the weakness of imperialism.

The second major feature of the pattern of structural assimilation in the buffer was the relationship of the masses to this process. It is here that the greatest distortion of historical development has occurred in our movement. The period of greatest mass upsurge in *every* country of the buffer is precisely the period of coalition governments with the bourgeoisie. In other words at exactly the time when mass pressure was the *greatest*, the Communist Parties resisted most any fundamental social change. The old bourgeois state structure was rebuilt in a concrete process of *destruction* of all potential expressions of dual power. The actual social transformations occurred in every country of the buffer only *after* the mass struggle had been dissipated and the masses themselves had been largely alienated from the state and demoralized.

Thirdly, the actual process of structural assimilation must be viewed in its *totality*. No single factor, such as nationalizations or even dominance of the CPs should be viewed in isolation but rather one must seek to understand this process as a whole. Essentially structural assimilation is a

combined process of the *destruction* of the political and social power of the bourgeoisie through administrative means, the *consolidation* of a monolithic party which is essentially an extension of the Soviet bureaucracy, the *purging* of the state apparatus of bourgeois elements and the *fusion* of the party and state bureaucracies into a single ruling bureaucratic caste. Internationally it means a turn of the individual country towards increasing economic interdependence with the USSR and other Soviet bloc countries removing the country as much from the capitalist world market as the USSR itself is, and an increase in the influence within the country of the Soviet Union with a decrease in the influence of the capitalist countries.

FOOTNOTES – PART III

1. It is always difficult to evaluate at what exact point a conscious decision was made by Stalin which resulted in a change of line in Eastern Europe. It is even harder to estimate to what extent Stalin planned ahead of time to make such a change in the future. However, Djilas's recent writings are highly suggestive, but we are afraid not definitive, on this point. (Djilas, Milovan. *Conversations With Stalin*, Harcourt Brace and World, 1962). Djilas pictures Stalin as conscious as early as 1945 of the necessity to transform socially the buffer region: "This war is not as in the past; whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. 'Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach.'" (page 114) Two years later he is quoted as expressing the same sentiments on Germany: "The West will make Western Germany their own, and we shall turn Eastern Germany into our own state." (p. 153) However, Djilas also quotes Stalin as being critical of the Yugoslavs for lagging in working out a coalition government with capitalist elements and fearful that the Bulgarians were proceeding too fast to the left. Thus it appears clear that even if Djilas is accurate on Stalin's early convictions to structurally transform Eastern Europe, (and we are inclined to think he is) this in no way vitiates the fact that Stalin just as ardently sought to maintain capitalist relations for a period in order to preserve peaceful relations with the capitalist world. The turn when it did come in 1947 was no less a sharp one for the fact that it was not altogether without preparation in various East European countries.

2. Daniels, op. cit. p 157

3. *ibid.* p.154

4. *ibid.* p 155

5. Brzezinski, op. cit. p 79

6. In *Czechoslovakia* the nationalized sector contained 57.7 per cent of the labour force after the war; 63.7 per cent in 1947; 89.2 per cent in 1949. The latter figure included 96 per cent of the total industrial workers.

In *Rumania* by 1949 85 per cent of the total industrial production was nationalized. In *Hungary* about half the industrial labor force was in the state sector. *Bulgaria*, by a single act in December 1947, increased the state sector (judging by percentage of production) from 6 per cent to 93 per cent. In *Poland* a mere 11 per cent of labor force was in the private sector in 1946. This figure dwindled to 7 per cent in 1948 and 4.6 per cent in 1949.

7. The following gives the percentage of their total export-import trade which the particular country had with countries within the Soviet bloc. *Bulgaria* 1937 - 12%, 1948 - 74%, 1951 - 92%; *Hungary*: 1937 - 13%, 1948 - 34%, 1951 - 67%; *Rumania*: 1937 - 18%, 1948 - 71%, 1951 - 79%; *Czechoslovakia*: 1937 - 11%, 1948 - 30%, 1951 - 60%.

8. The *Polish* state administration, excluding party functionaries and state-enterprise officials, increased from 172,000 in the pre-war period to 348,500 in the post-war period despite a decrease of 30% in the population. Pre-war *Czechoslovakia* had 345,000 officials. This figure was raised to 792,000 in 1956 and the ratio of productive workers to administrative personnel declined from 4:1 to 2.32:1.

9. Germain, *The Soviet Union... op cit* pp 9-10.

10. Djilas throws interesting light on the intrigues in relation to the Balkan Federation. See: Djilas, *op cit*. especially "Section III, Disappointments".

PART IV: THE EAST EUROPEAN EVENTS AND MARXIST THEORY

Trotsky on Structural Assimilation

The Trotskyist movement did not have to tackle this question of Stalinist expansionism totally unprepared. Trotsky himself had analysed the USSR's entry into Eastern Poland, its war against Finland, and its establishment of strategic military bases in the Baltic states in the period just prior to World War II. Because these events featured prominently in the polemics with Shachtman, luckily they were treated with a thoroughness that might not otherwise have been the case.

In Eastern Poland, and partly in Finland, the USSR carried through a process which Trotsky called "sovietization" and which Germain later called "structural assimilation". In order to secure the territory as a structural part of the Soviet Union, the USSR was forced to carry through a limited civil war by essentially bureaucratic-military means which wiped out capitalist property relations in these territories and established a society identical in its essentials with that existing in the USSR. Thus, in territories under the direct control of the Red Army and with the limited participation of the masses, the Soviet Union was capable of carrying out a "measure, revolutionary in character - 'the expropriation of the expropriators' -achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion". (1)

Trotsky stated that:

"The overturn in property relations which was accomplished there could have been achieved only by the state that issued from the October Revolution". (2)

Thus he saw the property overturn in these areas as emanating from the October Revolution itself, as an *extension* of the workers state which that revolution produced and thus as testimony to the fact that its progressive character had yet to be undermined by the ruling bureaucracy. Further, the overturn was not the act of a conscious revolutionary force seeking to spread revolution, as both the bureaucratic collectivists and the Stalinist apologists claim. Rather, "the overturn was forced upon the Kremlin oligarchy through its struggle for self-preservation under specific conditions". (3) Thus its expansionism was essentially *defensive* in character. Trotsky also emphasized that while the progressive content of these social transformations must be defended the transformations *as a whole* are part and parcel and intimately linked with the reactionary international policies of the Soviet bureaucracy.

"The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution. Our *general* appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the *particular fact* that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure". (4)

Or as he states categorically elsewhere:

"We do not entrust the Kremlin with any historic mission. We were and remain against the seizures of new territories by the Kremlin." (5)

This complex approach of Trotsky's to the phenomenon of Stalinist expansionism as he witnessed it in his day is of considerable importance. Needless to say Shachtman never understood what he was saying. Sadly, later events were to prove that others as well did not understand him. In summary, then, Trotsky held that the USSR, despite its deformation, still retained the essentials of the state property forms which issued from the October Revolution. Because of this, the Soviet bureaucracy is capable of expanding into new territories and carrying through a structural transformation there. While we defend the progressive *results* of this process we are not advocates of the expansion of Stalinism. We feel this process is carried through in a reactionary bureaucratic military manner, and is used by the bureaucracy as a *substitute* for a genuine proletarian revolutionary world strategy.

The Buffer Zone Discussion

The early work of Ernest Germain on the role of Stalinism in the East European buffer remains one of the most valuable theoretical contributions made by anyone in our movement in the post-war period. Beginning with Trotsky's essential analysis of Stalinism in *Revolution Betrayed*, paying particular attention to the additional analysis Trotsky made of the Finnish and Polish events in *In Defence of Marxism*, and having a very fine grasp of the actual developments in the area, Germain started our movement off on the right track.

Germain contended correctly that in the first period the role of the Kremlin was to prop up capitalism in Eastern Europe rather than to carry through its revolutionary overthrow even though the situation was more than ripe for such an overthrow. However, because of the very nature of the USSR as a workers state, its military and political hegemony over the

area had a tendency to erode capitalist power in the buffer. It was therefore possible, Germain thought, that the USSR would overturn capitalist relations in Eastern Europe in essentially the same manner that the USSR did in Poland and Finland on the eve of the war. He called this method of military-bureaucratic overturn, *structural assimilation*.

Germain first presented this essential theory of structural assimilation in an excellent article, *The Soviet Union After the War* which was first published in French in September 1946. In this article he stated:

"The bureaucracy can definitely bring new territories into its control only by assimilating them structurally on the economic base which issued from the October Revolution. Thus structural assimilation may be gradual and may appear as a tendency. It is not at all necessary that the bureaucracy assimilate structurally all the territories which it is temporarily occupying; what is important is to determine the tendency. An understanding of the extent to which this tendency may be realized depends on relations of forces between the bureaucracy and imperialism on the one hand and between the bureaucracy and the proletariat on the other." (6)

In 1948, at the Second World Congress of the Fourth International, the last really Trotskyist world congress to be held, the important theses on the whole general question of Stalinism, "The USSR and Stalinism" was overwhelmingly passed. It is important to note that this meeting was held after the drive toward the structural assimilation of the buffer had already begun, though by no means had it been completed. This resolution restated the basic analysis Germain had made in 1946, noted the turn of the bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, but felt that this tendency in the direction of structural assimilation would not be consummated. (7)

At the meeting of the Seventh Plenum of the IEC of the Fourth International, held in April 1949, the last of a series of resolutions and the theses on the buffer with the backing of the central leadership of the International was passed. By now the process of structural assimilation had almost been completed in most countries of the buffer. The resolution noted:

".....The buffer countries - aside from Finland and the Soviet-occupied zones in Germany and Austria - constitute today a unique type of hybrid transitional society in the process of transformation, with features that are as yet so fluid and lacking precision, that it is extremely difficult to summarize its fundamental nature in a concise formula.(8)

"....We continue to define the buffer countries as capitalist countries on the road to structural assimilation with the USSR. This definition, necessarily awkward and too concise to embrace the different aspects of the buffer zone, thus signifies essentially that in the course of the process of the structural assimilation of these

countries the dialectical leap has not yet been produced. It stresses both the historic origins of the present situation, as well as the social physiognomy which is as yet undecided. But it does not at all imply that the bourgeoisie is in power as the dominant class in these countries. This definition implies that the situation in the buffer countries likewise differs from the the situation in a 'normal' and 'classic' capitalist society. It serves exclusively to denote the place of these countries in relation both to capitalism and the USSR, since Marxist sociology excludes the existence of economies and states that are neither capitalist nor Soviet (workers' or degenerated workers')."
(9)

It was in the aftermath of this Plenum that the real buffer discussion began - with Michel Pablo's challenge to Germain's theoretical approach.

While Germain's early work was excellent, he began to run into very serious theoretical difficulty as a result of two not unrelated events. The first was the conscious drive of the Stalinists towards structural assimilation of the Buffer countries which began in 1947, before the Second World Congress and was at its height at the time of the IEC meeting in 1949. The second event was the break of Yugoslavia from the Kremlin during the same period which as an immediate result produced a serious and deep turn to the left on the part of the Yugoslav leadership. Pabloism, in its first form, was an impressionistic reaction to these events.

Germain's problem was that, (a) while he considered structural assimilation a *possibility* in Eastern Europe the main thrust of his analysis was that the Kremlin would continue to maintain capitalist relations there and (b) to the extent that he viewed structural assimilation as a possibility for Eastern Europe he viewed it as occurring in exactly the *identical* way as it had occurred in parts of Finland and Poland and the Baltic states - that is by means of complete absorption into the USSR. This led to a situation where the main content of much of Germain's polemic with Pablo in 1949 and 1950 was devoted to an attempt to prove that capitalist relations continued to exist in Eastern Europe, a position which became harder and harder to maintain as each day passed.

Pablo's "theoretical solution" was a different matter entirely. It represented a complete break with the past Trotskyist analysis of Stalinism and with the essential dialectical method itself. Everything about the way Pablo approached these theoretical problems was wrong, alien. He began in his article, "The Class Nature of Yugoslavia" (10) with an impressionistic reaction to Yugoslavia rather than with the analysis the movement had been making of the buffer. Then as a subordinate aspect of his analysis of Yugoslavia he presented a criterion whereby the entire buffer could be considered a workers' state. Thus he presented two entirely separate and unrelated criteria for determining that Yugoslavia was a workers' state. Germain summarised them as follows:

“(a) The first holds that Yugoslavia is (and logically has been at least since 1945) a workers’ state because the *proletarian revolution* was victorious there, taking a peculiar and unforeseen form in the Partisan movement during the war.”

“(b) The second is that Yugoslavia is (and has been since as early as 1947) a workers’ state because industry and wholesale trade have been nationalised and the bourgeoisie has lost political power.” (11)

Obviously point (b), what evolved into the famous “three criteria” for determining workers’ states, was as true of the rest of the buffer as it was of Yugoslavia while point (a) was based on an analysis of events peculiar (at that time anyway) to Yugoslavia. In order to make some sort of sense out of all this the movement then proceeded to have two separate discussions: one on the buffer in general and the other on Yugoslavia. Thus, in the SWP, a Plenum in February of 1950 supported Germain (12) and resolved that the buffer, excluding Yugoslavia remained capitalist, while a Plenum in December of 1950 supported Pablo (13) and resolved that Yugoslavia was a workers’ state.

In order to facilitate an understanding of this problem we, too, must now set aside the Yugoslav question only to take it up once more when we have resolved in a rounded fashion an understanding of the rest of the buffer. Our tasks however, will not be to come to two unrelated analyses of these two theoretical problems making no real attempt to create an *integrated and non-contradictory total theoretical outlook*. Rather we will seek to apply at a later point the essential analysis which we work out on the buffer to *Yugoslavia* in much the same way that we will now seek to apply Trotsky’s analysis of earlier developments to *the buffer*.

The actual evolution of the discussion showed that it was very difficult indeed to keep these two discussions really separate. This was because, even in his discussion of the buffer in general, Pablo was proceeding on the basis of a new non-Trotskyist theory of the role of Stalinism in the revolutionary process. It was his position that between capitalism and socialism there would be a transitional period, which could last for centuries, during which the emerging workers’ states would have a distorted and deformed character. Thus Stalinism - that is political forces which produce distorted or deformed workers’ states - would be the main revolutionary factor for a whole epoch and the role of the working class under Trotskyist leadership would be postponed to the end of this centuries-long transitional period.

With such an outlook his central concern was to establish “criteria” to “prove” that this or that state was now a distorted or deformed workers’ state. He seemed little concerned with a clear explanation of the *exact process* which produced the particular state for the obvious reason that he felt all sorts of confused and diverse processes were at work - he saw many, many roads to the establishment of workers’ states (the one he had least

faith in was that of direct proletarian revolution).

In his second major polemical article (14) Pablo claimed that the buffer countries were becoming workers' states because: (a) nationalisations; (b) the process of structural assimilation was being completed; and (c) the masses actually were carrying through a proletarian revolution in a very "controlled" way (this is another form of his first method of determining that Yugoslavia was a workers' state). So here we find a little bit for everybody. Pablo's article seemed to have been based upon the methodological principle that if each individual theoretical explanation seems insufficient, standing by itself, to explain an obvious result, then combine the several inadequate theories in the hopes that the total effect will be to convince all and sundry of the desired conclusion.

The problem, however, is that the task before our movement then, and the task before us now, is not to "prove" a conclusion - that is to provide a basis for the labelling of the East European states as deformed workers' states. Our task was, and is, rather *to understand how such states came into existence*. Thus it is precisely this most confused area of our past theory - the understanding of the *origins, the revolutionary process which produced these workers' states* - that is most critically important to revolutionists whose main concern is precisely the *creation* of workers' states.

Pablo's third argument (argument 'c' above) about the role of the masses, is based essentially on a complete distortion of the actual events as they occurred. Only in Czechoslovakia can a case be made for even controlled mass participation in the social overturn and there only at the initial stages. So we simply cannot accept this as a serious attempt to understand the process as it took place in the buffer as a whole.

Pablo was of course right in viewing the process of structural assimilation as having been essentially completed in 1950 (argument "b" above). However, Pablo had no comprehension or even real interest in structural assimilation *as a theory*. To him it was just one process along side several other processes which produced workers' states. Thus he never comprehended the *methodological approach* that lay behind Germain's whole analysis of East European events since 1946. So, strange as it may seem, Germain, who most vigorously *denied* that structural assimilation had been completed in this period was more correct in his *methodological* approach than Pablo who so strongly insisted that the process of structural assimilation (which he did not even understand) was completed.

It was in fact Pablo's first argument (argument "a" above) which was to survive as the dominant "theory" within the Fourth International for explaining the emergence of workers' states not only in Eastern Europe but everywhere else as well. As long as a state could qualify under the "three criteria" - nationalisation of the basic means of production, monopoly of foreign trade, planned economy - it could properly be called

a workers' state and that was all that needed to be said. But whatever else may be said about the "three criteria" it should be clear that in themselves *they are not a theory at all*. At best they can be called a *half-theory* of the state, and interestingly the second half at that. That is, they are a way of determining what label should be placed on a state by studying only the *end-product* of a social process. In no sense are they an attempt to explain the *social process* which produced this end product. Obviously Pablo himself realized this and thus his attempt to confuse the issue by combining the "three criteria" with two mutually contradictory theories of the social process - arguments "b" and "c" above. Pablo's latter day followers - especially the SWP - no longer even make an attempt to explain this social process.

At the time John G. Wright, the most theoretically developed person then in the SWP, understood the completely bankrupt character of this "theoretical" argument as well as its alien origins. This is what he had to say in a polemic with an American supporter of Pablo, Bert Cochran (E.R. Frank):

This sociological approach amounts to the following: we set down two parallel columns and in one column we jot down the outstanding characteristics of the Soviet Union as it is today, in 1950; and in this connection we may, if we so desire, take note of its historical origin in what Comrade E.R. Frank labels as the revolution of a 'Classic Type'.

In an adjoining column we set down all the buffer states, including Yugoslavia and see what similarities can be found with the USSR under Stalin - this time without paying any regard whatever to the *historical origin* of what happened in each of these countries, ignoring who carried out certain measures, why and under what circumstances, ignoring just how they were carried out, who benefited thereby and so on.

And at the end, without weighing any of these diverse factors or evaluating them from the class standpoint and ignoring all the dissimilarities - *especially that of origin* - you conclude that all similarities constitute an identity. And therefore, in Eastern Europe what you have are revolutions of a 'new and special type'. What has this in common with our dialectical method? Very little.

....We are told that we are poor Marxists unless we apply a sociological method with unmistakable academic whiskers on it. It happens to be the formalistic method of comparative sociology which lays stress on dazzling similarities or 'common formulas' *regardless of time and place, class and origin*.

....Up to now our Trotskyist school of thought has rejected as false the notion of approaching economic factors, singly or collectively, *as if they led an independent existence; as if they could be*

weighed and evaluated at any time and any circumstances, separate and apart from *their class roots and class content*, independently of the methods of economic leadership and finally - what is most important - independently of the political programme and leadership involved. Yet all this appears to fall away in the thinking and argumentation of the 'workers' statist'. *We are presented with bare facts and statistics of nationalisations*. The course of events leading to them, the entire Kremlin policy with all its twists and turns from Potsdam to 1950, not to mention the wartime policies, evaporate into thin air. All this seems to be without apparent importance compared to the decisive 'reality' of nationalisations. *Assuredly this bears little resemblance to our method of thinking*.

Thus far in the discussion there has been considerable reference to the 1939-49 dispute with the petty-bourgeois opposition inside the SWP. This is only to be welcomed. But from the standpoint of method the following must be borne in mind.

In evaluating the class nature of the USSR, our opponents of 1939-40 denied completely the role of the economic foundation. The polemic, of necessity, stressed this aspect; the *subjective factor*, its role and importance, appeared to fall into a subordinate position. But, in reality, that was not the case. Because all of us, and in the first instance Trotsky, never dealt with Soviet nationalised economy as such, but invariably stressed its origins in the proletarian revolution and its subsequent evolution. We took into account all the changes introduced by the Kremlin and concluded that the qualitative stage or reversion to capitalism had not yet occurred in their remaining conquests of October. (emphasis ours.) (15)

By early 1951, on the eve of the Third World Congress of the Fourth International, events in East Europe had reached a point where Germain could no longer maintain his resistance to designating the states in this region as having working class character. Germain issued at that time an extremely important document known in the movement as the "Ten Theses" or in its longer form "What Should be Modified and What Should be Maintained in the Theses of the Second World Congress of the Fourth International on the Question of Stalinism?" This document finally recognised that the buffer countries had been transformed into deformed workers' states by the process of structural assimilation. However, by this time Germain had been so demoralised and confused by the sweep of events, that he made no serious attempt to answer in depth his own earlier theoretical objections to such a conclusion.

This analysis of the buffer was rounded out in the form of a resolution which was passed by the Third World Congress (16). This has been the position of our international movement on this question for the past dozen years.

Germain's Theoretical Objections

Several theoretical problems plagued Germain and contributed substantially to his inability to think through the theory of structural assimilation and properly assess the transformations that were occurring between 1947 and 1951.

Germain viewed structural assimilation as essentially a process of direct absorption of the whole region into the USSR. This is certainly what happened in Poland and Finland before the war. Germain's problem was that rather than seeking to understand the essence of Trotsky's theoretical approach to structural assimilation in his day, he seemed to expect a mechanical repetition of what happened earlier. Since this is not, the way things went he could not understand what really was happening.

Germain reasoned essentially as follows (17). First he gave considerable emphasis to the fact that Trotsky stressed that the masses played a certain limited role in the overturn of property relations in Eastern Poland. He correctly attacked Pablo and his supporters for distorting reality in trying to see such a role for the masses in the postwar structural assimilation. But this was not a really critical and central theoretical objection. The working class character was given to the social overturn not by any limited role the working class may have played here or there but by the *essential class nature* of the force which all admit played the major role in the transformation process - the Stalinist bureaucracy and apparatus.

Germain's second line of argumentation essentially negated the critical importance of the first line of argumentation. He recognised that under very special circumstances it was possible for structural assimilation to occur without the masses playing any significant role. He cited as an example the assimilation of the Baltic states during the war. However, he insisted that such assimilation was possible only because the Baltic states were incorporated within the boundaries of the USSR and this allowed the Stalinists to wipe out the bourgeoisie as a class through means of terror and police action which would have been out of the question outside the boundaries of the USSR.

Pablo accused Germain of making a fetish out of national boundaries and on this one point we are forced to agree with Pablo. It is clear from the whole development of the buffer that Stalin made no such fetish. In actual fact the Stalinists in Eastern Europe did wipe out the bourgeoisie (and many others as well) through a very effective and ruthless terror and without (with the partial exception of Czechoslovakia as we have noted earlier) any serious reliance on the indigenous working class. It is difficult to see how it could have been done more ruthlessly within the boundaries of the USSR.

In fact there is some evidence that the *exact form* in which the

structural assimilation process was to take place - that is whether or not there was to be any physical absorption of areas into the USSR - was something which Stalin did not decide upon right at the beginning. Milovan Djilas, whose book *Conversations with Stalin* has a deep ring of authenticity to it and much of which has been verified by other sources, states the following:

"From his (Stalin's) stated position and from vague allusions by Soviet diplomats at the time, it seemed that the Soviet leaders were also toying with the thought of reorganising the Soviet Union by joining to it the "peoples' democracies" - the Ukraine with Hungary and Rumania, and Byelorussia with Poland and Czechoslovakia, while the Balkan states were to be joined with Russia! However obscure and hypothetical all these plans may have been, one thing is certain: Stalin sought solutions and forms for the East European countries that would solidify and secure Moscow's domination and hegemony for a long time to come. (18)

It may very well have been Stalin's troubles with Tito which led him to decide upon giving up this course.

Whatever may be the actual facts in regard to what Djilas reports, it does little to alter the essential *theoretical* question. Once one recognises and fully absorbs the concept that the Stalinist movement worldwide, to the extent that it is independent of indigenous class forces, is basically *an extension of the Soviet bureaucracy* then when this Stalinist movement, in a region in which the USSR clearly dominates, carries through a social transformation it matters little whether the territory is formally a part of the USSR.

Thirdly, he felt that the backward nature of the area and the smallness of the countries involved did not provide a material base necessary for even developing the first beginnings of a workers' state. Thus, at a minimum, a Balkan Federation was necessary to provide the material basis for a development of a workers' state.

While there is no doubt that the Eastern European countries were quite incapable of taking even the first steps of establishing a workers' state in *complete* isolation lacking even the resources and territory at the disposal of the Russians in 1917, these states did not really exist in complete isolation. The transformation process was accompanied by a very close and direct economic linking with the USSR which in this period was already a powerful country economically. Further, it is also clear that these countries experienced *deep* distortions and perversions of their economic development precisely because of their relatively autarchic development. Germain's point was in truth largely correct - but not totally correct. Thus the narrowness of the material base for the transformation of these countries, given the close support of the USSR, was not a critical enough factor to actually prevent the transformation, but it was an

important enough factor to deeply injure their economic development.

Germain's fourth major objection was on the purely theoretical level and it was his most serious - the most difficult to answer even today. Germain noted that if one declares the East European states to be workers' states one must square their actual process of development into workers' states with the Leninist theory of the state. The Leninist concept of the state holds that a workers' state can be formed *only* by a process of the total destruction of the existing bourgeois state apparatus and the creation of a completely new type of state on the basis of the workers' and peasants' councils which spring up out of the mass.

In East Europe all such councils, or even potential expressions of mass will, were crushed during the first period of collaboration with the bourgeoisie. The actual social transformation was carried through in the state sector by a process of *purging* a section of the state bureaucracy, the inundation of the state apparatus with supporters of the Stalinists, and the *fusion* of the state and Communist Party bureaucracies. The basic bourgeois state structure was kept essentially intact and many of the personnel remained to this day. A similar process took place in the command sector of the army and police, etc. Thus it was Germain's contention that to label the East European states as working class in fundamental character was to carry through a basic revision of Lenin's view of the state comparable to Bernstein.

Later events have done nothing to alleviate this theoretical dilemma. In fact the contrary has occurred. Today virtually all in our movement properly recognise the East European states to have a working class character. Not only this but we also recognise Yugoslavia and China to be workers' states and as we shall see later the identical problem is posed by their evolution. Those who hold Cuba to be a workers' state also have to face this theoretical problem.

It is a sad commentary on the theoretical level of our movement that since 1950 when Germain first raised this problem, no one in our movement has sought to face up to it - including Germain. This is but another reflection of our essential thesis that our movement has not been approaching the problem of the creation of new workers' states in the post-war period in the proper way. The central question of a theoretical understanding of the *process* by which these states are created is ignored and discussion on all sides seems to centre around the subsidiary point of what is the proper label for the end result of this social process.

In trying to deal with this theoretical problem we are getting at the very heart of an understanding of structural assimilation. The process of structural assimilation is an essentially different process from the normal revolutionary process with which we are familiar. Any attempt to superimpose on events in Eastern Europe the type of process which led to the victory of the October Revolution is doomed to complete failure. Things

just did not happen that way.

We are not dealing here with a clear *progressive* revolutionary dynamic. The working class under Marxist leadership did not carry on a struggle which led to the destruction of the bourgeoisie and the replacement of the bourgeois state based on proletarian forms.

The fundamentally different *process* that occurred in Eastern Europe can be understood more clearly if one pauses for a second to think on the essential differences between the evolution of the USSR and that of Eastern Europe - of the distinction between a *deformed* workers' state and a *degenerated* workers' state. Pablo invented the term "deformed workers' state" to explain the fact that while the present social structure in the USSR is the result of the *degeneration* of a healthy workers' state created by a genuine revolution under a truly Marxist leadership, the deformed workers' states *emerged in the very beginning in degenerate form* never having passed through a healthy stage. This fundamental difference in evolution explains clearer than anything else the essential difference in the process which created the USSR as it is today and that which created the East European states.

When we add to the essential difference in process the *fundamental identity in end result* then we can begin to get at the root of the problem. In essence the creation of deformed workers' states in East Europe was a process of the extension of the already existent degenerated workers' state in the USSR. *Only in this way* can we explain *both* the identity in end result and the difference in process. Thus we are dealing here not with a simple progressive revolutionary development but the *extension* into a new territory of a *highly degenerated* form of a progressive social system. Thus in the *very process of social transformation* degenerative as well as progressive features are to be found *at one and the same time*. The "normal" cycle of revolutionary advance followed by Thermidor was in East Europe compressed into the same essential process. There was an essential oneness and identity to these two oppositional processes.

As we noted in the introduction to this project, Trotsky viewed the USSR as a workers' state which had moved *backward*, had degenerated in a *bourgeois* direction. Thus it contained highly contradictory elements - some reflecting the still not totally destroyed progressive results of the October Revolution and some reflecting the bourgeois society which had come before. The *old*, bourgeois aspect of Soviet society is concentrated primarily precisely in the *state apparatus* - in the usurpation by a petty bourgeois bureaucratic caste of the political power of the working class. The progressive *new* aspect of Soviet society is found primarily in the economic field, in the planned economy which has been distorted but which remains intact in its essentials. Thus Trotsky called for a *political revolution* rather than a *social* one thus making clear that it was in this *political* sphere that the greatest change was needed - that is, it was here

that the *closest identity with capitalist society* existed.

Trotsky was to make this point even clearer in a highly perceptive section of *Revolution Betrayed*, a section with considerable bearing on the theoretical problem we are discussing:

"If...a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucracy, administrators, directors, party secretaries and privileged upper circles in general. A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party." (19)

It is therefore understandable that with the extension of the degenerated workers' state into new areas the *least* change would occur in the *political superstructure*. If a bourgeois counterrevolution would remove less of the bureaucracy than a political revolution then certainly the extension of the USSR into a bourgeois state would likewise remove few of the old personnel of the bourgeois state apparatus, would create fewer changes in the state apparatus. In addition, the state apparatus, which was to emerge from this process was to stand in *partial contradiction* to the property forms established. Thus the fundamental contradiction of Soviet society was carried over into the East European buffer *from the very beginning* - the contradiction between the *counterrevolutionary bureaucracy* and the progressive property forms. This was to find concrete expression in the East German uprising and the Polish and Hungarian revolutions which followed structural assimilation so shortly after its basic completion.

In a fundamental theoretical sense what was new in the state apparatuses in the East European states was created by a proletarian revolution - the Russian October Revolution. Can anyone seriously conceive of these states being created if the Russian Revolution had not taken place first and the essential conquests of this revolution preserved even with fundamental bourgeois distortions?

We can therefore state that the lack of a clear revolutionary change in the state apparatus during the process of the extension of the degenerated workers' state, is a clear indication of the correctness of Trotsky's assessment of the *counterrevolutionary* nature of the bureaucratic caste and that this caste represents essentially a *retrogression* in a *bourgeois* direction rather than a new progressive class force in its own right. One final lesson from this theoretical problem: *wherever events confront us with this same theoretical problem we can be sure that we are again witnessing the same kind of contradictory social transformation which characterised the buffer - that is that once again structural assimilation is taking place.*

Only the theory of structural assimilation can explain the social transformations which occurred in East Europe. A concrete study of the events

in East Europe and a careful consideration of all the theoretical objections which have been raised to the theory of structural assimilation as an explanation of these events lead us to this conclusion. We must now turn to Yugoslavia and China to see how our theory stands up under these even more difficult tests.

FOOTNOTES: PART IV

1. Trotsky, Leon. *In Defence of Marxism* (Pioneer Publishers, 1942) p18. Only a very skeletal presentation of Trotsky's analysis is presented in this section. The reader is urged to read or re-read *In Defence of Marxism* pp18-21, 56-59, 130-137, 170-178.
2. *Ibid.* p175.
3. *Ibid.* p175.
4. *Ibid.* p19.
5. *Ibid.* p20.
6. Germain, Ernest. "Soviet Union After the War" *Op Cit.* pp7-8.
7. "USSR and Stalinism - Theses adopted by the Second World Congress" *Fourth International*, June 1948. pp118,119.
8. "The Evolution of the Buffer Countries" *International Information Bulletin*, June 1949, p17.
9. *Ibid.* p19.
10. *International Information Bulletin*, December 1949.
11. Germain, Ernest. "The Yugoslav Question, the Question of the Soviet Buffer Zone, and their Implication for Marxist Theory" *International Information Bulletin*, January 1950, p3.
12. Stein, M. "The Class Nature of the Buffer Countries in Eastern Europe" *Discussion Bulletin*, No. 3, June 1950.
13. Weiss, Murry. "Report on Yuglsoavia" *Discussion Bulletin* No 6, January, 1951.
14. Pablo, Michel. "Yugoslavia and the Rest of the Buffer Zone" *International Information Bulletin*, May 1950.
15. Wright, John G. "The Importance of Method in the Discussion on the Kremlin-Dominated Buffer Zone" *Discussion Bulletin* No 2, April 1950.
16. "Draft Resolution on the Class Character of the European Countries in the Soviet Buffer Zone" *International Information Bulletin*, July 1951.
17. For the clearest exposition of Germain's theoretical views see: Germain, Ernest. "The Yugoslav Question..."
18. Djilas, Milovan, *Op Cit.* p177.
19. Trotsky, Leon. *Revolution Betrayed* p253.

PART V: THE YUGOSLAV EXPERIENCE; MYTH AND REALITY

Yugoslavia: The Myth

The theoretical analysis of the evolution of Yugoslavia was to cause a tremendous amount of confusion in our movement. We must understand that the discussion of these events was taking place in a very small international movement, many sections of which only had the most tenuous connection with the working class, during a period in which the class struggle was on the ebb - in which the bourgeoisie was re-stabilizing its rule over the bulk of humanity. So it was very understandable that many should leave our movement in this period and that many of those who remained were to grasp at anything which seemed to offer an easier more "realistic" road to socialism than the building of our small movement as a vanguard for the class as a whole. The amazing aspect of this whole period was not the confusion but that some sought to resist the revisionist theories which became so dominant.

Also the quite unexpected break of the Yugoslavs with the USSR was to come at a time when our movement had not yet fully comprehended the developments in the buffer as a whole. Thus we had no fully thought out theoretical structure within which to seek to place the Yugoslav developments. This was to so completely confuse the theoretical process that even today it is difficult to make any real sense out of the important discussion process.

The first decision one must make in seeking to theoretically understand the Yugoslav evolution is to decide within what kind of *pattern*, what kind of *social process*, to place Yugoslavia. Up to 1948 no one thought of looking upon Yugoslavia in any other way except as part and parcel of the political and social evolution of the buffer as a whole. After 1949 and the split between Tito and Stalin, the exact opposite situation existed - no one saw Yugoslavia as at all related to the buffer evolution and everyone insisted it reflected a different, unique process.

The predominant view in the International on this question after 1949 reflected an attempt to fit Yugoslav developments within the framework of the *October pattern* of development. That is, the comrades claimed to see in the Yugoslav evolution a genuine *proletarian revolution* led by a *Marxist party* which resulted in a *workers' state* and rejected out of hand any consideration that the Yugoslav state also could have been the result of an *extension* of an already degenerated workers' state.

It was, of course, impossible for anyone to claim that the evolution of

Yugoslavia was *identical* to that of the October events and thus certain critically important *modifications* were introduced. It was recognised that in its early stage the Yugoslav Communist Party was a *Stalinist*, not a Marxist party. However, it was claimed that under the *pressure of the masses*, the YCP was *transformed* into a "left-centrist" party. Thus to the extent that the YCP "led a revolution" it came into conflict with Stalinism, it became *non-Stalinist* and thus our concept of Stalinism as counter-revolutionary *seemed* to remain unimpaired.

The resultant state structure was also not identical with the *soviets* of 1917. Democratic forms of workers' rule were absent in any clear way. But we are informed October was only a "norm", and real revolutionary events of our time are distinguished by the fact that they depart from this "norm". The price we must pay for "left-centrist" leadership of a revolution is a certain "distortion" or "deformation" of the end product.

However, we can hope for the best in the future. It is not excluded that the YCP will develop from its present "left-centrist" position into a Trotskyist party, complete the development of soviet forms, join the Fourth International and spur on a glorious "revolutionary regroupment" on a worldwide scale. The lessons we are to learn from this new experience as Murry Weiss of the SWP so well put it in 1950, is that "Stalinist parties can be transformed" and that "a centrist party can lead a workers' revolution to power." (1)

But to a serious, thinking Marxist, these were no minor lessons which Comrades Pablo and Weiss, in particular, were seeking to teach us at that time. For over one hundred years a central tenet of Marxism has been the *necessity* for the working class to be led by a *Marxist* party which had a *Marxist* theory - that is a *consistent class struggle outlook*. The great lesson of October was that *only* such a party could bring the working class to power, and that all *centrist* parties must inevitably fail at this most critical task. Now it is discovered that all this internal theoretical and political struggle which has taken up so much of the movement's time for a hundred years is not necessary. A *centrist* party can lead a revolution to victory if only the masses "pressurise" it. The penalty for centrism is not *failure* to make a revolution but distortions of the *resultant* product of the revolution. Even this should not worry one for obviously if *pressure* can transform a party to the point of bringing the class to power, who can say that more *pressure* cannot transform this leadership even further and force it to correct the distortions in the resultant state structure?

If all this be the case then what role is left for *us*, the conscious Marxists other than to assist in the process of bringing pressure to bear on other, larger political groups? What even is the need for internal discussion, theoretical work, and the many books of Trotsky, Lenin, and Marx?

But there is even a little more at stake in this new theory of Yugoslavia. Contrary to the claims of its authors, our traditional assessment of

Stalinism is not "saved" by the convenient gimmick of stating that to the extent that Stalinists carry through a revolution they no longer are Stalinist. For what in essence we are saying is that Stalinism as a political trend can be *transformed* into an effective revolutionary vehicle under pressure from the masses. If the masses can thus transform Stalinism into its opposite certainly Stalinism can no longer be viewed as a serious impediment to revolutionary development!

Michel Pablo's theory of "centuries of deformed workers' states" was but an inevitable logical deduction from the assessment of Yugoslavia made by the bulk of the movement at that time. Who could seriously deny that the Yugoslav development was not to be the pattern for the whole next epoch of humanity? The same is true of Pablo's "*sui generis* entrism". If the Stalinist parties could be transformed into revolutionary vehicles by mass pressure, it is absolutely correct for Trotskyists to deeply bury themselves in these parties. To refuse to do so certainly was *abstentionism* from what was viewed as the real, meaningful political developments of our day.

There was, of course, considerable resistance to all this at the beginning. Germain led the way internationally but his effectiveness was seriously weakened by his insistence that Yugoslavia as late as 1950 was still a capitalist state. In the United States John G. Wright upheld the same position as Germain in the party against a virtually unanimous leadership. (2) Many rank and filers, however, were very unhappy with the direction the Yugoslav question seemed to be leading the movement. But serious theoretical resistance to the *central underpinning* of Pablo's "centuries" thesis - his analysis of Yugoslavia - collapsed when Germain published his famous "Ten Theses" in 1951 which completely supported Pablo on this essential point. (3) Germain was never again to seriously resist Pablo and the opposition of those sections that were later to form the IC concentrated on the most *blatant manifestations* of Pablo's theories such as his "centuries" concept, his "war-revolution" thesis, and his entrism *sui generis* but never directly tackled the very *roots* of Pablo's outlook which are to be found in his analysis of Yugoslavia.

It is not hard to see the very real *liquidationist* implications Pablo's approach had for our movement. But it is our duty to do more than point this out. Marxism must base itself on facts not faith. If the facts really contradict our reason for being we must face up to them anyway - and cease to be. This is certainly the case if history is to show us another, easier method for consummating our central task of socialist revolution. Our forces are so weak that it would be a tremendous boon for the world working class if other, larger forces actually could lead it to power. The sacrifice of our little organisations would indeed be a small price to pay for this great advance for our class. But if this view is not substantiated by historical developments - if on the contrary we are driving towards liquidating the *essential instrument of proletarian revolution* because of a *false*

impression of reality - then we truly are criminals in the eyes of the world working class. We must therefore approach the real historical developments with a full understanding of what is at stake and reject all that is superficial, illusory.

Yugoslavia: The Reality

In order to understand theoretically the development of Yugoslavia it is important to emphasise both what is unique in Yugoslav history and what Yugoslavia shares with the development of the rest of the buffer. This is no simple task for the Yugoslavs themselves in the past period after their split with Stalin, created a whole mythology of their past history. Among the foremost propagators of the Yugoslav myth was the Fourth International itself! But we will do our best to get at the facts.

Tito began his career as a Stalinist as a special Comintern agent working out of Moscow in the 1930's whose special field was the Balkans. His last assignment was to go to Yugoslavia in 1937, where the party was considered to have considerable dissident "Trotskyite" elements in it. He was to take over and develop a cohesive monolithic party subordinate to the Kremlin. This he achieved so that when the war began he had a relatively small (no more than 12,000) but quite cohesive and disciplined formation.

The pattern that Tito followed during the war was identical in its main respects with the pattern followed by the Stalinists in most of the Balkans - most particularly in Greece, Albania and Eastern Bulgaria. In all these areas the Stalinists were instrumental in the formation of partisan guerrilla armies in the countryside mainly recruited from the peasantry. Politically the Stalinists sought to create a common "Liberation Front" with all sections of the population, including the bourgeoisie, the landowners and the church. However, while this was partially achieved for temporary periods in these countries, on the whole this class collaborationist line was torn asunder by the social upheaval that took place in these countries. The partisans found the only social force capable of real struggle against the Nazis was the peasantry in the countryside and the working class in the underground metropolitan movement. Further, these peasants could only be organised through a *social programme* of a profoundly revolutionary nature whose main feature was land reform. On the other hand the bulk of the bourgeoisie and the landowners, faced with this social revolutionary movement, collaborated with the Nazis and Italians against the partisan movement. So a civil war situation developed in these countries.

In Yugoslavia, the Stalinists sought to the best of their ability to contain the social revolution within a bourgeois framework and to merge their forces with those of the bourgeois Mikhailovich's Chetniks. However as long as they espoused a land reform programme and mobilised the

peasantry, the Chetniks would prefer the Nazis to them. But should they openly abandon their peasant programme then they would destroy the effectiveness of their resistance force.

In this period certain differences cropped up between Tito and Stalin which were later blown up all out of proportion. Stalin kept putting pressure on Tito to tone down the social programme of the Partisans and to try to come to an agreement with the Chetniks. Tito resisted this pressure not out of any principled objection to the proposals but because they were *practically* impossible of achievement because the Chetniks had gone over to the Nazis and any toning down of the social programme would destroy the necessary peasant support the partisans rested upon. Not only did Stalin in the end go along with Tito's judgement on this but so did the imperialists and even the bourgeois government in exile. For in 1944 the Allies stopped all military aid to the Chetniks and sent aid to the partisans. Also the bourgeois London Yugoslav exile government followed suit. In this period the partisans issued a declaration which made clear their aim was to maintain the struggle within capitalist bounds:

"The National Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia is in its essence a movement which has been endorsed by the entire people, and is both national and democratic. Therefore, we must emphasise once more that the leaders of the Movement of National Liberation of Yugoslavia have before them one single important aim: to fight against the occupiers and their lackeys and build up a federative democratic Yugoslavia, and not - as our enemies accuse us - the aim of introducing Communism." (4)

Yugoslavia was liberated in the main by the Partisans themselves though parts of the country were liberated by the Red Army and the liberation of Belgrade was carried through jointly by the Red Army and the partisans. Thus, with the military victory of the partisans, a deep and profound *civil war* was consummated with the bourgeoisie completely discredited and in flight, the old bourgeois state apparatus non-existent, and an armed peasant mass in control of the country. All the revolutionary features of the buffer in general (and all of Europe for that matter) were in Yugoslavia most intensively felt. In addition, *incipient organs of dual power* already existed in the countryside in the form of Liberation Committees which had considerable regional power and which were in large part democratic and reflective of the interests of the peasantry. The formation of similar committees in the major cities and the fusion of the peasant and worker forces would in short order have established real Soviet Power in Yugoslavia.

It was precisely *at this moment* that Tito concluded an agreement with the Bourgeois London exile government for a coalition regime, the famous Tito-Subasich Agreement. Germain correctly notes the importance

of this event:

"The real question of the reconstitution of a state apparatus in Yugoslavia was posed at the time the Partisan armies approached the big cities. And this was precisely the time when the Tito-Subasich agreement was concluded!" (all caps in original) (5)

This agreement which Pablo and Weiss passed off as an episodic error was of fundamental importance as it limited the revolution to the bourgeois democratic framework at the precise period when the elemental upheaval of the masses was pushing it to a socialist conclusion. While the coalition government was only to last a few months in Yugoslavia as compared to a few years in the rest of the buffer (a sign of the revolutionary intensity of events in Yugoslavia) it existed long enough to permit *the reconstitution of the state apparatus on a bourgeois basis*. The local committees on the countryside were subordinated to a centralised state apparatus identical in form to that in the other East European countries. The local committees in the city, *where the presence of the working class immediately raised the question of class rule*, were bureaucratically formed from the very beginning and never had a really independent existence.

Only after the revolutionary movement was stopped in its track by a bloc with the remnants of domestic capitalist forces and the more important international imperialist forces behind them, only later did the process of structural change take place - after the mass movement had been subordinated to the bourgeois state apparatus. Germain summarises it well:

"The state apparatus reconstructed in 1944-45 was not a workers' state apparatus. The revolutionary movement of the Yugoslav masses stopped before reaching its goal, and this stoppage of the mass movement was the price paid by the Yugoslav CP for its recognition by imperialism and by the royal clique of Subasich. Stopped before achieving its aim, the movement of the masses remained dormant up to 1948. If later, as in the other buffer zone countries the CP in power eliminated the bourgeois parties and took radical nationalisation measures these were done by purely administrative methods. The CP in power did not appeal to the masses at any time before the split with the Kremlin. If the action of the masses before 1945 presents fundamental differences with that of the other buffer zone countries, it does not play any role between 1945 and 1948, the period during which all the political and economic overturns occurred in Yugoslavia." (6)

Germain correctly points out that after 1945, Yugoslav developments followed closely the pattern of the rest of the buffer. This is why no one in our movement, or in any other movement for that matter, saw Yugoslavia as the unique development it was later claimed to be. This in our opinion was not due to simple theoretical blindness, but rather to the fact

that throughout the whole period until 1948 Yugoslavia was an important and integral part of the whole buffer zone. Even the complete destruction of the state apparatus was not a qualitative difference from other buffer countries. The state apparatus in Poland was almost as completely destroyed and was reconstructed in much the same manner. In fact, when it came to nationalisations, Yugoslavia actually lagged behind Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Of course the relative greater weight of the mass movement in Yugoslavia and the absence of sizable Red Army deployments combined with the solid organisation of the YCP were important factors which differed *in degree* from similar factors in other buffer countries. The strength of the mass movement increased the instability of the coalition government making conditions quite impossible for the bourgeois cabinet ministers. It also forced the YCP, *for fear of a genuine takeover by the masses themselves*, to carry through the structural transformation *sooner* than in other buffer countries. The fact that Tito assumed power pretty much on his own without complete dependence on the Red Army combined with his carrying through the structural transformation process at an earlier date than in the other countries, gave Tito, *by 1948*, an independent base of power in his own bureaucratic state apparatus and monolithic party which made it *possible* for him to resist Stalin - something not possible for most of the other buffer CP leaders.

Pablo claimed at the time that Tito, in so far as he carried through a genuine proletarian revolution, broke with the Kremlin and ceased being a Stalinist. We must state clearly and emphatically that this is *pure mythology* having no basis at all in the facts! *Tito, during the process of the reconstitution of the bourgeois state as well as during the process of structural transformation was fully a Stalinist in every sense of the word.* Not one bit of evidence has been produced to show that Stalin opposed the structural transformation process - though it is possible that he may have felt that Tito's *timing* was a bit too quick. All evidence rather verifies the view that Tito carried through this transformation with the agreement of Stalin and that during this period Tito was the most avidly loyal Stalinist in all of Eastern Europe.

The approach of the YCP leadership in this period is most graphically illustrated in the report of June 5th, 1945 of the Soviet Minister in Belgrade to the Kremlin. This was later revealed in the publication of the Yugoslav-USSR correspondence:

"We would like, continued Kardelj, the Soviet Union to look at us as representatives of one of the future Soviet Republics, and not as upon representatives of another country, capable of independently solving questions...(They) consider the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as being a part of the All-Union Communist Party, that is to say, that our relationship....(should emphasise) that Yugoslavia in the

future would be admitted a constituent part of the USSR. Therefore they would like us to criticise them directly and openly and to give them advice in what way to conduct home and foreign policy of Yugoslavia in the right direction.” (7)

Tito himself had this to say about this period of Yugoslav history:

“We had too many illusions and were too uncritical in taking and replanting in Yugoslavia everything that was being done in the Soviet Union.” (8)

It perhaps may be difficult for comrades to understand how the leaders of the YCP could have gone through the partisan experience, had a number of differences with the Kremlin leadership from time to time, but remained in this period not only Stalinists but as one commentator has put it “more Stalinist than Stalin”. (9) Milovan Djilas’s previously quoted book, *Conversations With Stalin*, is extremely helpful in this respect as he gives considerable detail on the differences the Yugoslavs had with Stalin but also expresses their deep feelings of identity with Stalin, their essentially Stalinist outlook. One of the most recent books published on Yugoslavia well summarises this period in the following way:

“The new Yugoslavia was not technically a ‘satellite’; it was not forced by Moscow to do things against its will. Nevertheless, up to 1948 it was, no less than the satellites proper, oriented to Moscow in word and deed and thus, in effect, represented an extension of Soviet Power.” (10)

“Titoism” did exist as a trend of sorts in this period *within* the Stalinist movement. It represented the most hardened Stalinist line similar to “Zhdanovism” in the USSR. As we have earlier noted, “Gomulkaism” was its opposite. Stalin utilized Zhdanov and Tito precisely to *spur* the development of structural transformation when he decided on this course. However, as the process unfolded, the “Titoists” and the “Zhdanovists” precisely because of their hardened *Stalinist* character became potential sources of opposition within the Stalinist system and had to be subordinated or purged. Thus Tito, who in 1946 was considered a possible heir of Stalin as head of the international Stalinist movement, in 1948 needed to be subordinated to the interests of the *USSR* in order to facilitate the subordination of the whole region to the *USSR as a country*.

The Tito myth makers not only distorted Tito’s real relations with Stalin in the period before 1948, they also over-emphasised his *uniqueness* and the *uniqueness* of the whole Yugoslav development. The Yugoslav pattern during the war was in all essentials identical with the pattern followed by the *Albanians* and the *Greeks*. Here, too, there were partisan peasant guerrillas. Here, too, there was a condition of civil war with the bourgeoisie in the Axis camp. Here, too, the liberation was accomplished by the partisans. In fact Albania was *completely* liberated by the partisans while in Yugoslavia the Red Army played at least a small role.

The different courses taken by Greece and Albania were not at all due to any *superiority* of the *Stalinists* in one of these countries over the other. In fact a very good case can be made for the more revolutionary character of the Greek over the Yugoslav party. Greece was turned over to the imperialists as part of a deal made between Stalin and Churchill. Had the correlation of forces been more disadvantageous to the Kremlin than it was at the time who could doubt but that Yugoslavia might also have been turned over? If that had been the case can there be any question but that Tito would have reacted much as the Greek Stalinists reacted?

Albania makes the same point in still another way. Small, primitive Albania went through in microcosm the identical development that Yugoslavia did. It formed the bourgeois coalition government in much the same way and this coalition broke up in much the same way. It carried through the structural transformation at an early date as did Yugoslavia. *At no time did the Red Army ever enter Albania.* Up to 1948 there was no ground whatsoever for viewing Hoxha as any more or less a Stalinist as Tito. In the period prior to the Yugoslav break, Djilas has recently revealed, Stalin played with the idea of encouraging Yugoslavia to absorb Albania. In order to preserve Albania from this fate, when Stalin broke with Yugoslavia, Albania became avidly Stalinist. Today, when Yugoslavia is being brought back into the Stalinist camp, Albania suddenly discovers its "Leninist" orthodoxy and seeks an ally in China. Little Albania did not fit into our myth makers' preconception so this incongruous piece of the jigsaw puzzle was quietly dropped to the floor. Who would miss such a small country? Strange as it may seem nobody did miss it.

The outbreak of the Tito-Stalin dispute in 1948 and 1949 was of course an event of extreme importance both for the future evolution of Yugoslavia and as a precursor for a process of splinterings in the Soviet bloc as a whole which has become so apparent today. An understanding of the *real causes* for this split is essential in an understanding of Yugoslavia.

It is extremely important to note that this conflict *began* as a conflict between the bureaucracy of the USSR and that of Yugoslavia. There is no evidence whatsoever of pressure from the masses playing any role of significance at the beginning of this process. (11) The conflict was essentially over the closely related issues of Stalin's attempts to economically take advantage of Yugoslavia as he had done in the rest of the buffer and the Yugoslavs' desire to maintain some real authority for its own bureaucracy. Thus the disputed questions first centered around such issues as: the various joint USSR-Yugoslav enterprises, trade relations between the two countries, questions of control over the Yugoslav army and its relationship to the military establishment in the USSR, relations of Yugoslavia with other buffer countries, etc.

This conflict began in a period when the USSR was seeking to consolidate the buffer as a whole on a social basis compatible with the USSR.

Thus Stalin feared deeply that any tendencies towards resistance to USSR influence over the buffer as a whole would soon be *internal* opposition - that is opposition within the Soviet system as a whole on a worldwide basis. Such internal opposition is intolerable to the very totalitarian structure of the degenerated workers' state.

The USSR did nothing in Yugoslavia different essentially from what it did in the other buffer countries. What was unique was the ability of the Yugoslavs to resist the domination of the *Soviet Union as a country* over it. Furthermore, while only the Yugoslavs successfully resisted Stalin, *Titoism* as a trend of resistance *within* the bureaucracy to such domination existed in all the buffer country CPs. Thus Yugoslavia differed from the rest of the buffer essentially in its *ability* to resist *successfully*.

Yugoslavia's bureaucracy was able to resist successfully because it had already consolidated its power through the process of structural assimilation some two years before the rest of the buffer. In addition the Yugoslav bureaucracy had been fashioned through a combined process of partisan military operations and governmental rule over large sections of Yugoslavia for several years prior to the establishment of its rule over all of Yugoslavia.

Following the break with the Kremlin the YCP did begin a partial controlled mobilisation of the Yugoslav masses from on top. (12) The break with the Kremlin severely weakened the bureaucracy and in order to seek new bases of support in an extremely difficult period it was thus forced to make a limited left turn as far as its internal policies were concerned. However, while conducting thus a more radical line *internally*, *externally* it initiated a rightward course of conciliation with world imperialism. This course led it to actually *support* the imperialist side of the Korean conflict.

Thus Yugoslavia exhibited a unique form of bonapartist rule. The bureaucracy in part rested itself on the masses to which it made real, but very limited concessions. The most important of these was its system of limited local control through workers' councils. However, it did not give up its real power to these councils as is amply illustrated today when Krushchev himself endorsed these.

The bureaucracy also in part rested on world imperialism which extended to Yugoslavia important economic aid and with which it carried on the bulk of its trade. But, contrary to the predictions of the Kremlin, it never went fully over to capitalism.

And finally, and this has been understood the least, the Yugoslav leadership also rested *in part on the USSR*. There can be not the slightest doubt that the ability of Yugoslavia to survive in the absence of the existence of the USSR was out of the question. Only the possibility that Yugoslavia might return to the Soviet Bloc should the imperialists play rough with it, prevented imperialism from so acting. Its main aim, in any

event, in relation to Yugoslavia was to encourage a process of splintering and disintegration in the Soviet Bloc as a whole rather than any particular immediate gain in Yugoslavia per se. Thus the imperialists have not acted sharply to the return of Yugoslavia to closer relations with the USSR. The imperialists undoubtedly correctly feel such a development will bolster that section of the Stalinist bureaucracy internationally which is willing to work with the West - for the *West's* aims.

Finally we must reemphasise that the creation of the basic social structure of Yugoslavia took place *prior* to the break with the USSR. The bureaucracy which ruled Yugoslavia at the end of the war, rules Yugoslavia today. At no time in this entire post-war period was there the slightest evidence of any serious dismantling of this bureaucracy. The fundamental social structure of Yugoslavia has remained constant from 1946 to 1963 and in its essence is identical to that existing in the USSR today. *Yugoslavia, while being a definite independent factor within the world Stalinist system, never fully broke out of that system.* So today it carries through its rapprochement with Krushchev without any internal strains whatsoever and in fact with the seeming blessing of the West.

We can therefore see that Yugoslavia broke from the Kremlin for the same reasons that Albania solidarised itself with the Kremlin. Albania today breaks from the USSR largely because the break between Yugoslavia and the USSR was *not* definitive.

The Theory of Yugoslav Development

It is our conviction that the attempt to impose upon Yugoslav developments the pattern of October - even in a distorted form - leads only to a distortion of actual development. The essential distortion is to *telescope* into one continuous period the early partisan struggle when indeed the YCP was under considerable mass pressure, and the period *following* the split with the USSR when again the YCP did mobilise, from on top, the masses - leaving out the critically important 1944-48 period which is so difficult to fit into the preconceived pattern of these empiricists.

However, it was precisely at the height of the mass upsurge in 1944-45 that the YCP formed a coalition government with Subasich. It was during *this* period that the state structure, which had been destroyed by years of occupation and civil war, was rebuilt *on a bourgeois model*. All in our movement recognise that the actual social transformation took place *after* the breakup of this coalition government in 1945. Thus no one claims that the state which *first emerged* from civil war struggle was a *workers' state*. Thus the workers' state was created in Yugoslavia, during the period of the receding of the mass movement, and by the same essential means as in the rest of the buffer - by *administrative* means.

What then was truly unique in Yugoslav development? Little if any-

thing remained of the old state structure in 1944 and thus the state needed to be rebuilt almost from scratch. But this was essentially the case in Poland; and China, whose evolution was to be seen as so closely following Yugoslavia, had far more extensive remnants of the old state structure than either Poland or Yugoslavia. The Red Army while playing a minor role in liberation, immediately withdrew and played no direct role in the social overturn. But the Red Army never entered Albania and, even more interesting, the Red Army had completely withdrawn from Czechoslovakia at the time of the coup there and the social transformation that was to follow. No, the presence of the Red Army is an oversimplified explanation of structural assimilation.

Essentially, there was nothing peculiar to Yugoslav development other than a particular combination of (a) an almost complete absence of a viable capitalist class; (b) the existence in the early period of a powerful mass movement primarily peasant in nature; and (c) the existence from almost the beginning of a more cohesive and self-confident bureaucracy. (a) and (b) meant that the "bourgeois" stage in Yugoslavia was of shorter duration and more superficial and (c) allowed for the structural assimilation of the country at an earlier date than in the rest of the buffer. Both the existence of a more stable bureaucracy to begin with *and* the early structural assimilation of the country put the YCP leaders into a position where they were able to resist the deeply chauvinist aspect of the Kremlin policy in this period - an aspect which hurt the interests of the national bureaucracy in Yugoslavia itself.

Once the buffer in general is *really* understood there are no theoretical problems connected with Yugoslav developments in particular. The basic point is to recognise the nature of the domestic CPs as essentially an extension of the Soviet bureaucracy itself. Once this is recognized then social transformations of a more "indigenous" character like that in Yugoslavia can be comprehended. Yugoslavia differed only *in degree* in this respect - this was not a *qualitative* difference.

The split of Yugoslavia with the USSR and its current rapprochement can only be understood when one recognises that this split was not definitive - that Yugoslavia never *fundamentally* left the Soviet camp. It always relied in part on the existence of its immediate enemy - the USSR.

We must reject the attempt to impose the October pattern on Yugoslav developments in even a distorted form not only because the theoretical conclusions that must be drawn from such an application are repugnant to us but also because this simply cannot be done without distorting reality itself. We are forced to apply the theory of structural assimilation to Yugoslavia not simply to "solve" a theoretical problem, but because only such a theory can explain the real evolution of Yugoslavia. We remain Marxists not for dogma sake but because *only* Marxism can explain reality - past, present and future.

FOOTNOTES: PART V.

1. For the best rounded exposition of this thesis see: Weiss, Murry. "Report on Yugoslavia", *op. cit.*
2. Wright, John G. "Memorandum on Yugoslavia" *Internal Bulletin*, vol XII, no 3, October, 1950.
3. Germain, Ernest. "What Should be..." *op. cit.*
4. Daniels, *op. cit.* p134.
5. Germain, Ernest. "The Yugoslav Question...." *op. cit.* pp6-7.
6. *Ibid.* p8.
7. Brzezinski, *op. cit.* p39.
8. Hoffman, George W. and Fred Warner Neal. *Yugoslavia and the New Communism* (20th Century Fund, New York, 1962) p81.
9. Brzezinski, *op. cit.* p38.
10. Hoffman *et al.* *op. cit.* p81.
11. Some bourgeois commentators have tried to view the conflict as essentially rooted in a conflict over peasant policy. Of course there is no doubt that the Yugoslavs sought a slower pace of collectivisation than the USSR advocated. Also the peasants certainly had some influence on the YCP as it is estimated that over half its members were peasants in 1948. But this was also a factor in other countries of the buffer, most especially Poland. It is doubtful if the theorists of "mass pressure" on the YCP were thinking of *peasant pressure against* collectivisation - in any event.
12. Germain, who at the beginning, anyway, was more sensitive to actual developments in Yugoslavia - as his own theory of the capitalist nature of Yugoslavia collapsed - sought briefly to maintain that the proletarian revolution took place at this time *after* the split. While such a theory could maintain an October-like pattern for Yugoslavia it had no relation to reality so he soon gave it up. See: "Draft Resolutions on the Development of the Yugoslav Revolution". *International Information Bulletin*, September 1950.

PART VI: STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION IN ASIA

China and the Yugoslav Pattern

By the time the social transformation of China began in earnest, the Fourth International was split into two groups, the International Secretariat led by Michel Pablo and the International Committee inspired by the SWP. The discussion of the Chinese question was thus, for the most part, conducted separately in the two international organisations. However, it would be a mistake to interpret this as meaning the theoretical analyses that both forces evolved were unrelated. As the IC comrades never seriously reexamined the analysis the Fourth International as a whole had made of Yugoslavia, these comrades could not fully break out of the Pabloite methodological approach in their analysis of China.

Let us first look at how the Pabloites themselves analysed China. The resolution of their "Fourth World Congress" (1954), states:

"Threatened with being overwhelmed by the revolutionary wave of the masses and faced with no alternative other than being crushed politically and physically by reaction, the Yugoslav CP, and later the Chinese CP, went beyond the orders of the Kremlin and marched to the conquest of power." (1)

Thinking this through a little further the resolution goes on to say:

"...the Yugoslav CP and the Chinese CP have been able to lead a revolution victoriously and independently of the Kremlin and have in these instances ceased to be Stalinist parties in the proper meaning of this term." (2)

However, these parties still have Stalinist carryovers in their ideology and practice which "distort" the workers' states they create. But this should not really bother us for we are informed:

"The Marxist theory of revolutions by no means implies that no revolution could ever triumph, no matter what the circumstances, without a 100% Marxist leadership." (3)

This being the case, of course *our* role in these countries also changes.

"Since both the Chinese CP and to a certain extent also the Yugoslav CP are in reality bureaucratic centrist parties, which however still find themselves under the pressure of the proletariat of these countries, we do not call upon the proletariat of these countries to constitute new revolutionary parties or to prepare a political revolution in these countries." (4)

The Pabloites were applying the same essential thesis to China as they

did to Yugoslavia. The revolutionary masses pressured the CP to carry through a revolution. To the extent that the CP so functioned it "ceased to be Stalinist" and came into conflict with the Kremlin. However, as the CP was not a "100% Marxist party" certain distortions crept into the resultant workers' state. Since mass pressure once forced these CPs to carry through a revolution it is certainly logical to hope more pressure would force them to correct the "distortions". The logical result of this theoretical outlook is - the abandonment of our central strategy of creating Trotskyist parties which fight for a political revolution in these countries.

While the IC as an organised body never directly tackled this theoretical problem, the SWP, which was the political inspirer of the IC in its formative stage, did conduct an important discussion which culminated in the 1955 resolution, "The Third Chinese Revolution and its Aftermath." (5) This resolution took a fundamentally different *political* stand in relation to the Chinese CP and its regime. It saw the creation in China of a bureaucratic caste similar to that in the USSR and openly called for a political revolution to overthrow it.

"In terms of political organisation the Mao bureaucracy succeeded in the very course of the Third Chinese Revolution in imposing a totalitarian state power. They are now seeking to entrench this bureaucratic superstructure on the proletarian foundation, on the conquests of the revolution. This insoluble contradiction, which characterises the USSR, and which renders the regime that of permanent crisis, is now being reproduced on Chinese soil, posing before the Chinese workers the iron necessity of political revolution against the bureaucratic caste. (6)

Excellent as this statement is - and it is one of the best products of the SWP's break with Pablo - it requires a *theoretical explanation* of the *process* by which the essential structure of the USSR was "reproduced on Chinese soil". Here the resolution falls down. The best it can do to explain how it was possible for the Chinese CP to carry through the social transformation is to give credit to the overwhelming *objective* weight of the permanent revolution as a sort of anthropomorphic super-historical force. This is but a variation of the Pabloite theory of mass pressure forcing the Stalinists down the revolutionary road. The deformation of the resultant workers' state is explained largely by the Stalinist "schooling" of the CCP leadership. As to whether or not the CCP, at the moment it carried through the revolution "ceased to be Stalinist", the resolution is ambiguous (though the weight tends to be against this thesis).

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the Pabloite theory of the *evolution* of China should have wide influence within the SWP and in the International Committee in general. The best example of this is Murry Weiss' article "Trotskyism Today". This article, dedicated to the

20th anniversary of Trotsky's death, states that "the Yugoslav and Chinese Communist parties had to tear loose from their Stalinist moorings in order to lead social revolutions." (7) Once again we are urged not to worry about the theoretical implications of this concept as far as *our* role is concerned: "Trotskyists have never claimed a franchise on revolutionary theory and practice. On the contrary, all of our work is directed toward convincing the working class and its parties to take the revolutionary road." (8) It is difficult to think of a clearer expression of Pabloism. *Our* movement is not seen as a future leadership of the class. Rather our role is to convince *others* to take the revolutionary road. We remain on the sidelines of history as *commentators*, as *advisors* to others. But this revisionist, non-Marxist outlook flows logically and inevitably from the Pabloite analysis of the evolution of Yugoslavia and China.

The more recent 1963 resolution of the SWP on the Chinese question represents a further step in the direction of the Pabloite theory. It declares:

"Riding the irrepressible peasant uprising from 1947-1949, the Communist Party broke with Stalin's Menshevik line of collaboration with the national bourgeoisie and conducted the civil war to its logical conclusion by organising, mobilising and leading the armed masses to the conquest of power." (9)

We already know from the analysis in the previous section that this Pabloite thesis – the ability of a Stalinist party to be transformed into its opposite by mass pressure and to carry through a socialist revolution in the October manner with only some possible "distortions" as the price for not being "100% Marxist" – is not only deeply revisionist in its political conclusions but a total distortion of reality in Yugoslavia. We must now turn to the events in China to see if these events were closer to the Yugoslav myth or the Yugoslav reality.

Did the Chinese Communist Party Turn Into Its Opposite Under Mass Pressure?

There is general agreement in our movement on the nature and role of the Stalinist movement in China from the betrayal of the Second Chinese Revolution in the 1920s through the World War II period. Mao Tse-tung came into the leadership of the CCP with the backing of Stalin and under his leadership the CCP followed every twist and turn of international Stalinist policy. While conducting a civil war against the bourgeois Kuomintang regime, the CCP always sought to contain the struggle within capitalist bounds. Also, time and time again, it sought to work out a compromise popular front regime with Chiang Kai-shek himself. For instance in 1937 Mao declared, in a typical statement of position: "May

the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party work in close harmony! May all fellow countrymen who do not want to be slaves rally together on the foundation of Kuomintang-Chinese Communist Party solidarity!" (10) Even as late as April 1945 Mao declared: "The Chinese people cannot, and therefore should not, attempt to build a socialist state system." (11)

Conflicting interpretations of events centre essentially around the 1947 to 1949 drive to power conducted by the CCP and its army. As was the case with Yugoslavia, the current version of these developments, which seems to be so widely accepted in all sections of our movement, is based essentially on a superficial *hindsight impression* of these events evolved by both Pablo and Germain in the period between 1950 and 1953. No one in our movement interpreted these events *at the time they took place* in the way they were later to interpret them. Was it that our movement, because of its theoretical shortcomings, did not understand the actual developments as they occurred in the 1947-49 period, or were the events to be *telescoped, distorted* years later in a way that would have been impossible to do when the events actually took place?

Peng Shu-tse, one of the founders of the Chinese section of the Fourth International, made a basic contribution to an understanding of the Chinese Revolution in his "Report on the Chinese Situation" published in 1952. (12) Of special significance is the section of this report entitled "Is the Seizure of Power by the CCP the Result of 'Mass Pressure' and in Violation of the Objectives of the Kremlin?"

The end of the war brought to China, as it did almost universally throughout the world, a tremendous upsurge in the mass movement. This is how Peng describes the situation:

"The first period immediately after the war, from September 1945 to the end of 1946, marked a considerable revival and growth of the mass movement in China. In this period the working masses in all great cities, Shanghai being the centre, first brought forward their demands for a sliding scale increase in wages, for the right to organise trade unions, opposed freezing of wages, etc. They universally and continuously engaged in strikes and demonstrations. Although this struggle in its main features did not pass beyond the economic framework, or reach a nationwide level, it yet at least proved that after the war workers had lifted up their heads, and were waging a resolute fight against the bourgeoisie and its reactionary government for improvements of their living conditions and general position. It actually won considerable success. Doubtless, this was the expression of a new awakening of the Chinese workers' movement.

Meantime, among the peasant masses, under the unbearable weight of compulsory contributions, taxes in kind, conscription, and the threat of starvation, the ferment of resentment was boiling, and

some disturbances occurred in regions controlled by Chiang's government. Notably the students, representing the petty bourgeoisie, engaged in large-scale protests, strikes, and manifestations in the big cities. (13)

How did the CCP respond to this very real pressure from the beginnings of an important mass upsurge? This was precisely the period in which "it kowtowed to Chiang Kai-shek and pleaded for the establishment of a 'coalition government' (for this purpose Mao flew to Chungking to negotiate directly with Chiang, and even openly expressed his support to the latter in mass meetings), and tried its best to pull together the politicians of the upper layers of the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie in order to proceed with peace parleys under the initiative of American imperialism." (14) As far as the mass movement was concerned it reacted as follows:

"As for the economic struggle of the working class, not only did the CCP not offer any positive lead to transform these struggles into political struggles, which was quite possible at that time, but on the contrary, in order to effect a 'united front' with the 'national bourgeoisie', it persuaded the working masses not to go to 'extremes' in their conflicts." (15)

Thus, during the actual mass upsurge which followed the end of the war, the CCP acted in precisely the *identical manner* as did the Communist Parties all over the world – as a *brake* on revolutionary developments. When the mass pressure was at its highest point, rather than acceding to this pressure, the Chinese Stalinists functioned so as to *contain* and *hold back* the masses. They did this not only in relation to the urban masses but also in the countryside where they opposed any serious agrarian reform.

The CCP did not seriously move against the Kuomintang government until the fall of 1947 at a time when, because of the brutal repression of the masses who lacked any real leadership, the mass movement "*was actually at a very low ebb.*" (16) What caused the CCP to initiate its "left turn"? The real cause was not the pressure of the masses but rather the pressure of Chiang! After utilising the period of negotiation with the CCP to crush the mass movement Chiang then moved directly to *annihilate* the CCP itself. Only when its very existence as a political force was at stake did the CCP move into opposition to Chiang Kai-shek and initiate a battle which was to culminate in victory in 1949.

What was the relationship of the Kremlin to all of this? There can be no question but that the CCP collaborated extremely closely with Stalin for almost three decades, that its leadership was handpicked with the backing of Stalin, that it had always supported every twist and turn in Soviet international policy. In seeking to bring about a coalition government in 1945-47 the CCP was carrying out the basic international line of Stalin. During this period the CCP leadership was in intimate daily contact with

the Russians who had occupied Manchuria.

To the extent that there was a conflict between the CCP and Stalin at this time it was not of a fundamental nature but rather similar to the conflicts that had existed between the Yugoslavs and Stalin during the war. That is, being directly on the scene, Mao could see that his very organisation was threatened with extinction if he did not resist Chiang. Thus he moved to fight back for his own preservation even at the cost of some friction with Stalin. However, this difference in approach only lasted a short period and from that point on Stalin fully supported the CCP's drive for power. *There is not one shred of evidence that Stalin opposed this struggle course once it was under way. We state unreservedly that those who see a conflict between Stalin and Mao over the struggle for power are perpetrating pure mythology.* Djilas recalls a conversation with Stalin in 1948 in which China came up. Stalin stated:

"Here when the war with Japan ended, we invited the Chinese comrades to reach an agreement as to how a *modus vivendi* with Chiang Kai-shek might be found. They agreed with us in word, but in deed they did it their own way when they got home: they mustered their forces and struck. It has been shown that they were right and not we." (17)

What was the real relation between the CCP and the masses during the actual struggle for power from 1947 to 1949? There can be no doubt that the CCP army itself was a tremendous body of peasants and had solid support from the peasantry during its struggle for power. This support played a critical role in the victory of the CCP in 1949. However, this peasant mass was at all times a *controlled* force. It was organised into a disciplined *military* force. This military force was controlled by an immense bureaucracy which had been solidified over many years of semi-governmental existence and rule over large sections of China. *Independent action by the peasants themselves* was discouraged throughout this period and the struggle was restricted to large scale *military action*.

The urban social classes, and the working class in particular, were kept *outside* of the struggle. The working class was discouraged from any independent action of any kind as the cities were to be liberated in military fashion by the peasant army from outside. Thus whatever pressure was exerted upon the CCP from the masses was peasant pressure and not working class pressure. Further, this peasantry was contained as a controlled body primarily by its organisation into a bureaucratic and disciplined army.

Under normal conditions such a peasant war could not lead to victory. Mao had tried it before in South China and had failed completely. The following abnormal conditions existed after the war in China.

The Chiang regime itself was so rotten that it was in the process of collapse in an almost automatic fashion (this explains Chiang's desperate

attempt to destroy the CCP, when the CCP was willing to work with the Kuomintang). And thus no serious internal bourgeois resistance could be put up.

Secondly, because of both the weakness of indigenous forces with which to work, and also because of its large commitments elsewhere to maintain bourgeois rule, American imperialism finally abandoned Chiang in effect granting China to be a part of the Soviet sphere of influence, and devoted its efforts to the not so easy task of preserving imperialist control throughout the rest of Asia.

Thirdly, the USSR gave the CCP aid which was *decisive* to its ultimate victory. First, while handing part of Manchuria back to Chiang, Stalin destroyed almost all important factories and mining machinery so that the industrial might of Manchuria could not be utilised by Chiang for some time. (18) Second, when it disarmed the Japanese troops it turned these arms over to the CCP. These Japanese weapons played an important role in transforming the CCP army from an essentially guerrilla operation into a modern army capable of the kind of large scale military operations which led it to victory in 1949. (19) The ability of the CCP to win without relying on the independent mobilisation of the rural or urban masses was directly related to its ability to create a real army. This as we see was primarily due to the support the USSR gave the CCP. This support shows both that the USSR, while favouring a coalition government with Chiang did not rely *solely* upon Chiang's good will as far as the Eastern buffer was concerned, and also that whatever differences may have existed between the CCP and Stalin, these were not significant enough to prevent the USSR from aiding in the *arming* of the CCP.

It is our opinion that the victory of the Chinese Revolution can only be understood – not as seeing it as an outcome of a conflict between the Kremlin and the CCP – but rather as the coinciding of an international turn in Kremlin policy with a unique internal situation in China. It must be noted that the start of the drive to power by the CCP came *precisely* at the time that Stalin began his drive to secure his Western frontier through structurally assimilating Eastern Europe. He could not but be equally concerned with his Eastern frontier where the United States, especially, had direct and real imperialist interests.

Li Fu-jen, writing in the theoretical organ of the SWP, expressed well in 1949 this relationship between the Kremlin's international aims and the internal dynamics of China:

“Having long since abandoned Lenin's concept of the defence of the Soviet Union through the extension of the socialist revolution, Stalin is replying to the American threat in kind. Between America's Far Eastern bases and the Soviet borders he plans to interpose a Stalinist dominated China. *The conjuncture of the Kremlin's strategic plans and the internal dynamics of the Chinese political development*

furnishes the basic explanation for the current Stalinist policy in China, for the shift from Peoples' Frontism to renewed class struggle."
(20)

Thus we see when the masses were in real *independent motion* the CCP rather than responding positively to this pressure played a negative, inhibiting role. It initiated its struggle for power because its very existence was threatened. It conducted this struggle on essentially a military basis keeping even the peasant masses under military and bureaucratic control and *at no time* did it involve the working class in the struggle. Having been for three decades the chosen instrument of the Kremlin bureaucracy it collaborated closely with the Kremlin during the entire period of the struggle for power despite important tactical differences at the preliminary stage of the struggle. The struggle itself was basically determined by the conjunction of the Kremlin's international situation with the internal political dynamics of China. China was to be a Stalinist-dominated Eastern buffer to parallel the Stalinist-dominated Western buffer that was already being consolidated during this period.

The Structural Assimilation of China.

The victory of the Chinese Revolution in the middle of 1949 was of course an event of great revolutionary significance. The bourgeois government of Chiang Kai-shek was totally destroyed and for the first time in modern Chinese history imperialism's hold over the country had been shattered. The main power in the country was the CCP and its massive peasant army. The CCP owed its basic allegiance not to the imperialists but rather to the USSR, the product of a workers' revolution.

Tremendous as this event was, it did not lead to any immediate fundamental social overturn. *The victory of the CCP did not produce a workers' state.* This elementary fact is recognised by all, including of course the CCP itself. But its *theoretical significance* is ignored by all. At the moment when the revolutionary triumph was at its highest point, when the imperialists and their servants had been totally removed from mainland China, when millions of peasants were under arms, when the revolution finally entered the cities if only in an essentially limited military way – at this moment when the situation was overripe for a social overturn the CCP did *not* carry through such an overturn. Rather it devoted its effort to the creation of a *coalition* government with the remnants of the national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeois forces, guaranteed the sanctity of *private property* in the immediate period, and set to work to reconstruct the *bourgeois state apparatus*.

This is the way Germain, in this period highly sympathetic to the

CCP, described the situation as late as 1952:

"In large parts of China, notably in most of the provinces south of the Yangtze, the Mao Tse-tung government has purely and simply taken over on its own account the old central administrations of the Kuomintang, including the very governors themselves. Only the armed power has been completely recast and represents an armed power with a different social character. State administration here has remained on the whole what it was before. Moreover, this involves the richest provinces in China, containing the centre of light industry and of the bourgeoisie. The latter's representatives in the central government, even though they do not wield much power on the national level, represent useful observers for their class and are preparing positions for retaking power 'bit by bit', as Chen Po-ta has said." (21)

While much of industry was taken over in the period immediately following the coming to power because it had been deserted by the bourgeoisie, there remained substantial bourgeois holdings throughout the country. Mao himself proclaimed in 1949: "Our policy is to restrict capitalism and not to eliminate it..." (22) The importance of these capitalist holdings can only be understood within the framework of the existence of a bourgeois state apparatus over large sections of China and the CCP's policy of rule through a coalition government, even if the bourgeois representatives within this coalition were quite weak. It was thus in the interconnection of these various levels of bourgeois influence that the bourgeoisie continued to have influence in China in this period. Germain also noted this: "It is solely in the special conditions of this *state apparatus* that the bourgeois property which survives takes on exceptional significance. For in this way it allows the bourgeoisie simultaneously to exert control from within, and to disintegrate and corrupt from without.." (23) It should be remembered that Germain is writing in 1952, almost three years after the coming to power of the CCP.

The 1949 Revolution thus produced a highly emaciated form of bourgeois rule (shall we say "phantom" or "ghost-like" rule?). The bourgeoisie maintained influence through large sections of the old state apparatus which were untouched, through continued existence of capitalist economic holdings, and through the form of a coalition government pledged to go no further than the "democratic stage". At the same time the main power in China was the CCP and the CCP was not a bourgeois party as it had roots in other than the national bourgeois class of China. Thus the instability and weakness of bourgeois power in China in the period from 1949 to 1952. Not only Germain, but even Pablo was not quite ready to call China a workers' state in the middle of 1952. The SWP was to wait two more years.

In the discussions held in our movement in 1952 only Peng was to project as a possible future development for China what he called its

"East Europeanisation", After first dealing with the two basic alternatives for China of capitalist counterrevolution or genuine proletarian revolution, Peng poses a "third" way:

"The two perspectives set forth above deal with only the most fundamental outcomes of the possible eventual developments in the Chinese situation. But, in view of the opportunist bureaucratic deformations of the CCP leadership and its present intimate relations with the Kremlin, these two perspectives will meet frantic resistance since either one of them would be fatal for this leadership. Consequently, it will consciously or unconsciously choose a third road -- the road of gradual assimilation into the Soviet Union. That is to say, under the ever-increasing menace from bourgeois reactionary forces allied with imperialism and the ever-growing dissatisfaction and pressure of the masses, on the one hand, the CCP would empirically 'exclude' by gradual steps the bourgeois parties and cliques from the political field. Through operations of 'purge' and 'fusion', it would annihilate these factions and the 'Coalition Government', and form a 'one-party dictatorship' in name and in content, which would conform to the so-called 'transformation from peoples' democratic dictatorship to proletarian dictatorship'.

On the economic plane, it would carry out a gradual expropriation of bourgeois private properties, the expansion of nationalised properties, in keeping with the so-called 'ascension from the economy of the New Democracy towards the socialist economy'. On the other hand, while executing these political and economic measures, the CCP would make certain concessions to the pressure of the masses in order to utilise them as a weapon to suppress reactionary influences. But it would never basically loosen its rigorous bureaucratic grip upon the revolutionary activities of the masses, especially of workers and poor peasants, lest they pass over the permitted boundaries or interfere with its basic line.

This line may be called 'the line of East-Europeanisation'. But there exists an essential difference between the two processes: the 'assimilation' of the buffer states was accomplished entirely under military control of the Kremlin, and through its directly designated Stalinist bureaucrats in those countries. In China, due to the vastness of territory, the numerousness of the population, and the powerful influence of the CCP itself, in the absence of the Soviet Army, and especially taking into account the experience of the Yugoslav events, the Kremlin can rely only on its general superiority in economic and military force and its control over Manchuria and Sinkiang to threaten and exert pressure on the CCP. However, in appearance, it would still pay certain respects to the 'independence and sovereignty' of the regime of the CCP and allow it to proceed on its own 'initiative'. (24)

This is, of course, *exactly* what happened. Under the increased pressure of world imperialism expressed most directly in the Korean War and needing to stabilise its rule, the CCP began the process of structural assimilation in 1952. The bureaucracy ruling China had been formed many, many years earlier in the process of civil war and was therefore much more cohesive than its counterparts in Eastern Europe. Thus it moved more slowly, deliberately in carrying through the social transformation. The mass upsurge which accompanied the coming to power in 1949 was now ebbing and the control of the bureaucracy over the whole of the country was not seriously challenged — except externally and thus the significance of any internal agents of the external imperialist enemy. Slowly it purged any unreliable bourgeois elements out of the state apparatus, tamed its coalition partners to the point where they were only window dressing, tremendously increased the nationalised sector of the economy while keeping a few “national bourgeois” as mere window dressing, and carried through a brutal forced collectivisation programme. Even the CCP leadership itself did not see this process reaching the point of the establishment of the “proletarian dictatorship” until 1956. (25)

This was a period of the closest, most intimate relations between the CCP and the Kremlin. There is no evidence whatsoever of Kremlin disapproval of this course — in fact all evidence points to its full support and backing of the Chinese regime in this period. While the masses played a limited and controlled role in the process, by and large the transformation took place by bureaucratic and military means. Thus the main factor in the social overturn was the CCP and its bureaucracy. The *nature* of the CCP was therefore critical to the determination of the nature of the social process.

The CCP emerged from 30 years of civil war *appearing* as if it was a peasant party. It was made up largely of peasants, ran a massive peasant army, had the support of the bulk of China’s peasantry. But it was soon to show that it was not *simply* a peasant party. In the period when it was forced to move more and more on the road of structural assimilation it was also, interestingly enough, forced to take steps to change its own social composition by stopping recruitment from the peasantry and recruiting only workers. (27) It then carried through essential social tasks of the *proletariat*, tasks of an essentially *urban* social change remote and distant to the peasantry. Finally it forced through a collectivisation programme and at a later date a Commune programme both of which actually *deeply alienated* the great mass of the peasantry. In actual fact, throughout its *entire* history, as well as in the post-1949 period, time and again the CCP went counter to the aspirations of the peasantry and opposed land reform and land seizures — many times in a brutal, bureaucratic way. In every such case this action was dictated by the needs of the *Kremlin* which wanted a popular front regime in China. To the extent that the CCP was

and is independent of domestic social classes, it is dependent upon — *is essentially an extension of* — the bureaucratic caste of the USSR, the distorted product of a workers' revolution. *Only* when this is understood can one understand the role the CCP played in the social transformation process which occurred in China from 1952 to 1956.

We can therefore see that the *process* which took place in China *several years after* the coming to power of the CCP in 1949 was identical in *every essential* with the process which took place in the East European buffer including Yugoslavia. The social transformations took place not as a result of mass pressure nor in opposition to the wishes of the Kremlin. They took place essentially on the initiative of the CCP bureaucracy, from on top by military and bureaucratic methods, with the wholehearted cooperation of the Kremlin to fulfill not only the needs of the CCP bureaucrats for a relatively stable base, but also the needs of the Kremlin for a strategic buffer on the East. That extremely perceptive section of the SWP's 1955 resolution which refers to the basic contradictions of the Soviet Union being reproduced on Chinese soil can only be explained *theoretically* by the theory of structural assimilation.

The Sino-Soviet Dispute.

Perhaps the greatest "leap forward" on the theoretical plane is made by those who jump from the tactical differences Mao had with Stalin in 1947 to the current Sino-Soviet dispute and thus see the conflict as a product of Mao's purported differences with the Kremlin over whether or not to make a revolution in China. Missing is over ten years of the closest possible collaboration between the Mao leadership and the Kremlin — years in which the CCP carried through a successful drive for power, consolidated its regime, and socially transformed China.

Not only did the CCP collaborate closely with the Kremlin during the struggle for power and the period of the structural assimilation of China, but it played a special role in defense of the Stalinist bureaucracy when it was first really seriously challenged by the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. It was the great weight of the Chinese leadership, with the prestige of victorious revolution behind it, that the USSR was forced to utilise to help build support throughout Eastern Europe for the crushing of the Hungarian workers' uprising. This ignoble effort must never be forgotten by the world working class for it shows both the real nature of Chinese Stalinism as well as the nature of its relations with the Kremlin in that critical period.

No, the Sino-Soviet dispute was not brought about because the CCP was in any sense more revolutionary than the Russian CP. Its causes lie, like the Stalin-Tito dispute that came before it, in deep and important conflicts in national interests between the bureaucracy ruling the USSR

and that ruling China. Only the completion of the social transformation gave the CCP a stable enough base to resist Kremlin pressure to subordinate Chinese development to its grandiose scheme of building "communism" in the USSR at the expense of the other bloc countries. As in the case of Yugoslavia, the solidification of a ruling bureaucracy over a long period of civil war prior to the actual social transformation also contributed to the *ability* of the Chinese to resist the pressure *all* Soviet bloc countries felt deeply.

The real cause of the dispute finds expression through two related issues which have come out into the open recently. The first is trade relations between China and the USSR. China claims, as Yugoslavia also claimed, that these relations were *detrimental* to China even though China needed economic development much more than the USSR because of the extremely low economic level of China at the time the CCP took power. The second issue is the conflict over the atomic bomb. In a world in which power and independence are very much wrapped in a country's ability to produce nuclear weapons, this is a question of no small import. Essentially, China has charged that the USSR reneged on its promises to help China develop a bomb of its own and instead sought to come to terms with US imperialism. There can be no doubt that this is the essential content of the recent nuclear test "ban". Atmospheric tests are precisely the kind of tests needed in the *early* stages of nuclear development. So the large powers, which already have a developed nuclear arsenal, agree to ban a test they no longer need knowing full well that a country like China does need such a test. Essentially then the dispute over nuclear weapons is a reflection of the USSR's desire to keep China in a *subordinate* international position and its willingness to collaborate with imperialism to achieve this aim.

The treacherous position that the USSR is taking in the Sino-India border dispute is another reflection of this very same thing. The inability of the Chinese and Indians to reach agreement on this issue is essentially caused by the aggressiveness of India which has strong imperialist backing. Rather than defending China in this situation which directly endangers the social conquests of the Revolution, the USSR today is blaming *China* for the dispute. Not only that, it is also giving military aid to India including missiles and jets which can be used against the Chinese. It is such *deep, concrete* issues of conflicting national interest which separate these countries — not the ideological trappings of the contenders which make the impressionists so happy.

One aspect of the ideological exchange does have some content. It is of considerable significance that China takes the side of *Stalin* in this dispute. Stalin is looked upon as a great Marxist who is to be emulated and the period of Sino-Soviet relations *under Stalin* is defended, praised. In this respect the recent charge of the Chinese that it was the CCP which

urged wavering Khrushchev to carry through the second intervention which crushed the Hungarian workers is extremely important. Such is the way the CCP "ceased to be Stalinist." It should be amply clear that the CCP in *no sense* is breaking from Stalinism in the course of this dispute.

It is of some theoretical interest that the latest Soviet bloc state to come into conflict with the USSR is *Rumania*. Rumania is resisting attempts of the USSR to keep it in a subordinate economic position within the Comecon as a supplier of agricultural products. It seeks rather to push forward an autarchic industrial development. Clearly Rumania is motivated here by a fear that without serious industrial development it will be economically dominated by other members of the Comecon and by the USSR especially. (Of course on purely *economic* grounds such autarchic development would be harmful to the development of the East European region.)

Thus the basis for Rumania's conflict with the USSR is also largely a question of national conflict just as much so as was the case with Yugoslavia, Albania, and China. Rumania, however, was purely the creation of the USSR's domination over Eastern Europe and does not have the more indigenous roots that these other countries (that is, their regimes) have. This verifies our assessment as to the real significance of the unique features of the evolution of these countries. The guerrilla war background of these regimes produced a more solidified bureaucracy more capable of resisting the Kremlin. But this was not a *qualitative* difference with the rest of the countries that were structurally assimilated. Today, as the bureaucracies of all these countries have had a number of years to develop, this difference in background becomes less and less important.

Fundamentally we must see this process, which has been perhaps a bit too impressionistically called "the fracturing of the monolith" as a reflection of the fundamental contradictions of Stalinism itself. The USSR has sought to build a strategic buffer on its Eastern and Western borders as a defensive measure against world imperialism. In order to secure this buffer against imperialism, the USSR found it necessary to carry through a social transformation in all these countries, utilising the local Communist Parties as its instrument. To the extent that these CPs were successful in carrying through this transformation, and thus developing an at least partially independent base of their own, these bureaucracies found they had interests different from and partially in contradiction to the USSR. Thus, to the extent that the USSR expanded itself into new areas, conflict within the resultant Soviet bloc as a whole grew. *This is the clearest sign of all that the USSR is not really an expansionist power for to the extent that the Stalinist system extends itself its internal contradictions are aggravated.* These contradictions developed not after a long and relatively peaceful rule of Stalinism over its expanding territory but rather *as a direct product of the very process of extension itself.*

However, despite their deep differences, all these states are also *dependent* on each other and on *the USSR in particular* for their survival in a capitalist-dominated world. These conflicts thus remain essentially *within* the Soviet bloc. For one of these countries to fully pull out of the bloc opens the door to either capitalist restoration or political revolution, both of which spell death to the bureaucracy. This is shown most clearly by the evolution of the most independent state of them all, Yugoslavia.

The Structural Assimilation of Tibet, North Korea and North Vietnam.

The current SWP resolution on China states, in a section on the unfolding of the permanent revolution in China: "The triumphant revolution has tended to extend into the neighbouring lands of Tibet, North Vietnam and North Korea....." (27) While such a concept raises no insurmountable theoretical problems, we are afraid it is just plain inaccurate (quite in character with the level of theoretical work the SWP is now producing). The role of Stalinism in the rest of Asia has not been as simple as that.

The social overturn in Tibet, was, of course, essentially the product of the social overturn in China itself. But Tibet, the Chinese will be the first to make clear, has not historically been considered a "neighbouring land" but rather a part of China. Furthermore, the Tibetan overturn was not the product of some impetus China gave to revolutionary forces in Asia. It was in fact the product of the process of structural assimilation once again — this time in its strictest "classic" pre-World War II form.

An Indian Trotskyist by the name of Kalyan Gupta, points this out in his excellent little pamphlet on the Sino-Indian border dispute. For many years the CCP carried on a policy of peaceful coexistence with the deeply reactionary feudalistic ruling Lama caste of Tibet. As long as the Tibetan monks accepted Chinese domination there were no problems. The Chinese actually bolstered this reactionary force and did little or nothing for the extremely oppressed Tibetan serfs.

However, in the long run such "peaceful co-existence" did not work out. Even though the Chinese leaders did not wish it, the social overturn in China as a whole had an undermining effect on feudal rule even in isolated Tibet. Thus the Tibetan feudal lords finally went into rebellion as a desperate effort to preserve an antiquated social order from erosion. This rebellion opened up Tibet to possible imperialist domination for certainly the monks could not stand alone without external aid. If Tibet were to fall under imperialist domination, the whole vast Southwestern "underbelly" of China would lay exposed and the strategically important Himalaya "buffer" with India would be no more. So, as Gupta notes, "this attempt was crushed by the Peking bureaucracy not with the help of Tibetan serfs but mainly by military means. Later on, they have sought to broaden their social base by organising the serfs.....With the onslaught on the feudal

structure, the process of the structural assimilation of Tibet into the new Chinese social order (that is, Sovietisation) has also set in." (28)

The Tibetan experience in 1959 once again shows both how the process of structural assimilation works and also the impossibility of a workers' state coexisting *internally* with another form of class rule. Rather than being an extension of the Chinese Revolution they represent the final consolidation of all of China by the Peking regime in a second, separate process of structural assimilation.

The social transformation of North Korea has simply nothing to do whatsoever with the victory of the Chinese revolution. North Korea was occupied by Soviet troops right at the end of the war. It was transformed in an *identical* way as the East European states with the presence of Soviet troops. Even the Pabloites recognise this. In their 1954 general resolution on Stalinism, they refer to "states produced by the expansionism of the Soviet bureaucracy, the occupation of these countries and their structural assimilation with the Soviet Union by military-bureaucratic means, supported in certain instances by a limited mobilisation of the masses." We are informed that "this is the case in the European buffer zone and in the case of the People's Republic of North Korea (where, incidentally, the mobilisation of the masses was on a larger scale)." (29)

Thus the structural assimilation of North Korea was the product of the extension of the USSR's army directly into Asia and not a by-product of the Chinese Revolution. Chinese influence in North Korea dates from its intervention in 1950 on the side of North Korea in the Korean War – some time after the structural assimilation took place. As late as 1959 China had 600,000 troops in North Korea which may help to explain its support for China in the present Sino-Soviet dispute.

North Vietnam's evolution was closer to that of China than was the evolution of North Korea. However, it *paralleled* Chinese development rather than being a simple *extension* of the Chinese Revolution. That is, Ho Chi Minh and the Stalinist leadership of the Vietminh stood in the same relationship to the USSR as did Mao and the CCP. It was the *USSR* (and to some extent the French CP, the most Stalinist of all the West European Communist Parties) which was the central influence on the Vietnamese Stalinists during their struggle for power *and* their consolidation of power in a section of the former French Indo-China. That is, the Vietnamese Stalinist movement was an extension of the USSR bureaucracy directly – not an extension of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy.

As Vietnamese developments followed closely, in parallel, the Chinese developments by a few years, there is no need to go into them here as they raise no new theoretical problems. However, there is one aspect of Vietnamese development which needs some brief comment. The political developments within Indochina since the end of World War II show clearly how *detrimental* to revolution international Stalinism can be. In

the wake of World War II, the Vietminh had complete control of all of French Indochina. The Japanese had surrendered to them and there was no need for any other troops. However, with the prior agreement of the Kremlin, British troops landed and quickly took over the whole country without meeting any resistance from the Vietminh. Then, after a brief period, the British turned the territory over to French troops. This is how French imperialism regained control of the whole of Indochina.

The French then turned to a brutal repression of the Vietminh who fled to the interior. With the beginning of the cold war and the turn in Kremlin policy in 1947, the Vietminh began a serious offensive. This is how the bloody seven year Indochinese war began.

Following the shattering defeat of French forces at Dienbienphu in 1954, it was clear that the Vietminh was sweeping the country. French control was restricted only to a couple of cities. With this victory as background the 1954 Geneva Conference took place at the initiative of the USSR. Under pressure from the USSR, and with China's support, the Vietminh settled for an agreement which, in effect left it only the top half of Vietnam with the imperialists still in control of South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Several years later, after the break-up of the coalition government in Laos – totally the fault of the right wing militarists – the Pathet Lao civil war led to a similar situation where the Pathet Lao controlled virtually all of Laos. Once again an international settlement was arrived at and this time the whole of Laos was to remain in the bourgeois orbit as a “neutralist” country.

Today the Stalinists are pushing for a similar solution of the civil war in South Vietnam where the Vietcong is gaining day by day. De Gaulle even suggests a “neutralist” regime for all of Vietnam, north and south, and it is understood that Ho Chi Minh is encouraging this initiative of De Gaulle's. However this all works out eventually, Stalinist policy has led to a situation in which, despite the heroic efforts of the mass of Indochinese people, the bulk of Indochina remains under bourgeois domination. Not much of a showcase for Stalinism as an “expansionist” force.

The Indochinese experience raises a very interesting theoretical question. Since the kind of movements in China and Indochina were so similar, and since both were engaged in real civil war in which the mass of the peasants supported a Stalinist-led movement – why did their final evolution diverge so much? Why is it that most of Indochina was lost and all of China transformed? Certainly Ho Chi Minh is as effective a leader as Mao Tse-tung and the heroism of the masses was as great in both countries. No, the only essential difference was the *external* one – the different places these countries occupied in the conflicting relations between the USSR and the imperialists. China, sharing an immense border with the USSR, was directly of great strategic value to the USSR. Also, being an

independent country direct imperialist intervention was at least a bit difficult. Indochina was of no direct strategic value to the USSR itself. Thus China was to be preserved as a great strategic buffer to the East for the USSR while Indochina was to be buffeted about at international bargaining tables which were to decide, despite the heroic efforts of the Indochinese peoples, where the line was to be drawn between Soviet and imperialist spheres of interests. But for a somewhat different relationship of forces in the immediate postwar period China, itself, could have suffered Indochina's fate — regardless of the efforts of the great masses of the Chinese people.

The Overall Role of Stalinism in Asia

The Chinese Revolution was a great historic event. It shows once and for all that the capitalist system is doomed, that capitalism has no real future. The overthrow of capitalism in such an immense country should have had a deep revolutionary impact on all of Asia — and the rest of the world as well. It should have had the kind of impact on the world working class that the Russian Revolution had — in fact, since the Russian workers' state survives and further has been extended into a large part of Europe, it should have had an even bigger impact than the October Revolution.

The Chinese Revolution did have an impact in Asia but it was not *qualitatively* of the same character as the impact of October. *On its own* it did *not* lead to the extension of the revolution to any other Asiatic country not to mention the rest of the world. The social overturn in North Korea was carried through by the USSR as a direct result of its military occupation following World War II. The social overturn in Tibet, considered by all powers to be a part of China and not external to it, was postponed for a *decade* and then carried through because the revolt of the Tibetan monks left the CCP no alternative. In Indochina the whole of the region was controlled by the Vietminh *prior* to the beginning of the 1947 CCP offensive. What the Vietminh was to later regain, it got because of its own independent struggle over seven bloody years and much of this was compromised at Geneva with the *support* of the Chinese.

The situation in the rest of Asia was even worse. Everywhere the Stalinist parties abandoned a revolutionary course and supported the national bourgeoisie as long as that bourgeoisie would favour "peaceful coexistence" with the Soviet bloc countries. This was the story in such important Asian countries as India, Japan and Indonesia.

It is a gross distortion of reality to attempt today to shift the responsibility for this *counterrevolutionary* policy of Stalinism in Asia solely to the USSR. The Chinese leadership was even *more* responsible because the prestige of its 1949 victory carried such great weight in all of Asia. *The line of the Chinese CP was one of peaceful coexistence with a vengeance*

throughout all of Asia for a solid decade. The basic policy of the CCP in Asia was forged first through the famous "Panch Sheel" agreement between China and India in 1954 which proclaimed the "five principles of peaceful coexistence". This policy played an important role in bolstering the bourgeois regime of Nehru in India – the regime which today has stabbed China in the back. This policy of collaboration with the national bourgeoisie was then broadened to include most of Asia at the Bandung Conference of 1955. Even today, when the Maoists take a pseudo-left stand against the Kremlin, the Chinese continue to endorse the policy of the Indonesian and Japanese Communist Parties. These two parties openly defend a *bourgeois* course for their countries.

Despite the enormity of the Chinese Revolution, this revolution did not extend itself elsewhere in Asia. While the Stalinist leadership of both the USSR and of the CCP favoured the military victory of 1949 in China and the structural assimilation which took place later, neither sought to extend the revolution throughout the rest of Asia. The Chinese experience as well as the East European experience, can only be understood through a recognition of the highly contradictory nature of Stalinism. The degenerated workers' state, which emanated from the October Revolution, has extended itself through its agents into large contiguous areas surrounding the USSR – a process we call *defensive expansionism* - while at the same time opposing throughout the rest of the world social overturn through genuine proletarian revolution.

FOOTNOTES – PART VI

1. "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism", *Fourth International*, No. 1 (Winter 1958) p.45.
2. *Ibid.* p.46.
3. *Ibid.* p.46.
4. *Ibid.* p.48.
5. *Discussion Bulletin* A-31, (October, 1955).
6. *Ibid.* pp.10-11.
7. Weiss, Murry, "Trotskyism Today", *International Socialist Review* Vol. 21, No. 4 (Fall 1960) p.110.
8. *Ibid.* p.110.
9. "The SWP Position on China – PC Draft Resolution", *Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 24, No. 19 (June 1963) p.4.
10. Daniels, *op. cit.* p.304
11. Daniels, *op. cit.* p.319.
12. Peng, S.T. "Report on the Chinese Situation", *International Information Bulletin* (February, 1952). While Peng understood China very well, he accepted unquestioningly the analysis of the International on Yugoslavia. Much of his argumentation was devoted to showing how what was in reality a *myth* of Yugoslav development would not work as a model for Chinese developments. He did not realize that the *reality* of Yugoslav development could serve as such a model. It should also be noted that

Peng interjected his position on the relation of the CCP to mass pressure and to the Kremlin into the SWP discussion on China in 1961, but its theoretical significance went generally unnoticed. See: Peng, S.T., "On the Nature of the Chinese Communist Party and its Regime – Political Revolution or Democratic Reform", *Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 22, No. 4 (March, 1961).

13. *Ibid.* pp.12-13.

14. *Ibid.* p.13.

15. *Ibid.* p.13.

16. *Ibid.* p.15.

17. Djilas, *op. cit.* p.182.

18. Peng, *op. cit.* p.8.

19. *Ibid.* p.8-9.

20. Fu-jen, Li. "The Kuomintang Faces its Doom", *Fourth International*, (February, 1949).

21. Germain, Ernest. "Report on the Chinese Question." *International Information Bulletin* (December 1952), p.15.

22. Daniels, *op.cit.* p.329.

23. Germain, *op. cit.* p.15.

24. Peng, *op. cit.* pp.42-43.

25. See: "Liu Shao-chi on the Transition to Socialism" in Daniels, *op. cit.* pp.352-356. This report was made in September of 1956.

26. In 1952 there was an important controversy over this question of the class character of the CCP. Peng claimed the CCP was a peasant party while Germain and others insisted it had a working class character because of its adherence to the USSR. During the period of this dispute the CCP made an important turn towards recruitment of workers. Peng, in time, was forced to modify his position. See in particular: Germain, *op. cit.* pp.8-11.

27. "The SWP Position on China", *op. cit.* p.7.

28. Gupta, Kalyan. *Sino-Indian Border Dispute* (Bijoy madhab Mallick, Calcutta, 1959) pp.8-9.

29. "The Rise and Decline of Stalinism", *op. cit.* pp.44-45.

PART VII – THE LIMITS OF STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION

Other Theoretical Variants

In the course of this project we have dealt primarily with the major theoretical and political challenge of Pabloite revisionism within our movement. We have shown that Pabloism not only is deeply liquidationist in its political conclusions, but is based on a complete distortion of reality – the product of a false, non-dialectical method. There are other theoretical variants, as much departures from the Marxist method as Pabloism, which have gained currency in and around our movement over the years. It is of particular importance that we deal with these theories as well, for these theories feed on the weaknesses of Pabloism. To reject Pabloism only to make a symmetrical error in the opposite direction would get us no closer to a working class line. As we will see, these theories also do not stand up to the test of real events.

Bureaucratic Collectivism: The theoretical and political logic of bureaucratic collectivism is abhorrent to all revolutionaries. By recognising bureaucratic rule in the USSR as a new class system, the logic of bureaucratic collectivism is to supplant the role of the working class by the new bureaucratic class leaving to us only the task of defending the slaves in the future totalitarian system.

Certainly no working class movement can be built on the basis of this kind of perspective and the Shachtmanites found it impossible to build even a small, primarily petty bourgeois sect. But we can no more reject bureaucratic collectivism because we find its political conclusions abhorrent than we could reject Pabloism simply for the same reason. We must put bureaucratic collectivism to the real test of objective events.

The expansion of Stalinism into East Europe and later China in the postwar period seemed to many a superficial thinker to be a confirmation of the Shachtmanite outlook. The new bureaucratic class *seemed* to be expanding its totalitarian grip over a large part of the world. The wave of the future was upon us and perhaps all we could do was rally to the defence of Western “democracy” or give up politics entirely and devote ourselves to the comfortable existence so easily available to the petty bourgeoisie in that period in the United States.

However, when one looks at the post war period as a *totality* the theory of bureaucratic collectivism makes no sense whatsoever. It can be defended only by a *subjective* reaction to an *impression of one aspect* of postwar events – the expansion of Stalinism. Beginning in the isolated slave labour camps like Vorkuta in Siberia, spreading to the East German

workers in 1953 and finally blossoming out in the armed uprising of the workers in Hungary and Poland, *another* aspect of postwar development was to show itself indelibly clear. Stalinism, after less than three decades of rule in the USSR and less than a decade of rule in Eastern Europe, was to find itself in a mortal conflict which almost brought its downfall. Whatever future it still may have, these events make it clear that this future will be short, the days of the rule of the bureaucracy are numbered.

Stalinism thus has shown itself to be a *transitional* stage in historical development rather than a new class society with a period of serious growth and development ahead of it before its contradictions begin to come to the fore. Any theory which does not express the *transitional, temporary, conjunctural* character of Stalinism must be rejected outright. Bureaucratic collectivism can do this only by making a mockery out of the Marxist concept of class rule and class society. "Ruling class" becomes transformed into a political judgement or just a plain swearword rather than a scientific designation for the role a group of people plays in a fundamentally new type of organisation of production.

Other aspects of the role of Stalinism likewise conflict with bureaucratic collectivist theory. If the bureaucracy is, in reality, a new ruling class based on a new and superior way of organising production different from both capitalism and socialism, then we must expect to see the bureaucracy as a social class, developing from *within* the capitalist system itself much as the working class has developed. It was this concept that Burnham had in mind in his "Managerial Revolution" thesis and *only* in this form is bureaucratic collectivism a consistent theory. But Stalinism did not expand in the postwar world on this basis. It did not grow out of the managerial strata of capitalist society at all. Rather it *extended itself from the USSR*. Thus the identity of Stalinism with the USSR – its extension through its own agents and in opposition to all strata of the countries in which the transformation took place – cannot be explained through the theory of bureaucratic collectivism. Whatever Stalinism is, it essentially emanates from the USSR and is *not* an independent social force produced from within capitalist society itself.

A third aspect of the role of Stalinism is totally inexplicable within the framework of bureaucratic collectivism. While the bureaucratic collectivists have little trouble explaining the totalitarian aspect of Stalinist functioning, the role of Stalinism in collaborating with capitalism – that is, its *counterrevolutionary* role in revolutionary situations – is totally inexplicable from this point of view. The major role of Stalinism in the postwar world has *not* been to act as an independent class force seeking power in its own right. Rather, it has acted as a conservative force *within* the working class seeking to *prevent* any revolutionary change. Only a theory which recognises in Stalinism a *conservative, reactionary* element *within* a *progressive* world force can understand the *contradictory* role of

Stalinism in the postwar period.

State Capitalism: The theory of state capitalism is essentially an attempt to answer a theoretical problem raised by bureaucratic collectivism. Its essential role in our movement has been that of a sort of theoretical rebellion from bureaucratic collectivism by people who find the orthodox theory unacceptable. It shares with bureaucratic collectivism a refusal to recognise any state as having a working class character as long as the working class does not have direct control over the state. This aspect of state capitalist theory is usually accepted as an *axiomatic, a priori* "given" and thus argumentation on this level is always fruitless.

The state capitalist rebels against the theoretical conclusions of bureaucratic collectivism which he correctly feels destroys the role of the proletariat as much as does Pabloite theory. By seeing Stalinist society as nothing more than a variant form of capitalist rule, the state capitalist preserves the role of the proletariat as *the* revolutionary force in modern society. The *retrogressive* counterrevolutionary aspects of Stalinism are, of course, understandable within this theoretical framework.

It is when this theory confronts the *reality* of the total role of Stalinism in the actual world that the trouble starts. For instance, as soon as one seeks to explain the actual role Stalinism played in Eastern Europe and in China in the postwar period state capitalism falls down. As we have shown in detail, Stalinism in order to preserve the buffer to the West and East from imperialist domination, was *forced* to carry through a fundamental transformation of society in these countries which in the process literally obliterated the capitalist class as well as private property.

The only way state capitalism can explain these events is by going over in actuality to that theory the state capitalist so strongly rejects — bureaucratic collectivism. The state capitalist is forced to see in *state* capital a deep antagonism to *private* capital — to recognise in fact, if not in words, a *qualitative* difference between the two. Once this step is taken the differences between state capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism are purely terminological and of no political import.

State capitalism shares with bureaucratic collectivism an inability to explain precisely why Stalinism as an international development is so closely related to the Soviet Union. If state capitalism is to make any theoretical sense at all it must be seen as a tendency inherent in capitalism itself, not as something emanating from the USSR. The Stalinists must be viewed as *agents* of state capital. But this is absurd, for these parties have no real ties with state capital developments within their own capitalist countries — their essential identity flows from their role as agents of the Soviet bureaucracy. To explain this "peculiarity" one must, once again, transform one's theory in essence into a variant of bureaucratic collectivism.

Once Again on the Process of Structural Assimilation.

A perennial problem which has plagued every discussion the movement has had on these postwar overturns is that of *dating* when the overturn took place. For instance, the date when Yugoslavia became a workers' state was variously placed: in 1944 when the Partisan armies achieved essential control of the country; in 1946-47 when the coalition government was broken up and the nationalisations completed; in 1949-50 when the YCP took a limited left turn in its struggle with the Kremlin. The Marcyites dated the social overturn in China with the coming to power of the CCP in 1949; many in the International chose 1952-53; the SWP waited until 1955 to declare it a workers' state; the CCP itself tended to date the overturn a little later than the SWP. A similar problem of "dating" plagued the Cuban discussion.

The problem of dating, like the problem of the destruction of the bourgeois state through "fusion and purging", is a reflection of the very *process* of structural assimilation. Wherever this problem occurs — as long as it is crystal clear that a social overturn has taken place — one knows one is dealing with this process.

The normal revolutionary process has an essential *moment* when the qualitative change takes place — the famous dialectical *leap*. Such revolutions have their *October* — a moment or short period of time in which a fundamental qualitative change in class rule takes place. There is never any real problem in dating a revolution of the October variety. What occurs is the same kind of qualitative leap as occurs in nature. Water is lowered to a particular temperature and, at once, it becomes a solid, leaping over intermediary stages. It is *this* kind of qualitative change which people vainly seek to find in the *abnormal* processes of the postwar world.

But not all qualitative change takes place that way — either in nature or in social phenomena. Since Marx and other Marxists, being essentially interested in revolution, emphasised the importance of qualitative leaps, it would be a mistake to think that they ever claimed this to be the *only* way qualitative change takes place. In fact one of the richest facets of the dialectical method is its ability to explain another kind of qualitative change: the slow, long, process of a number of quantitative changes bringing about a fundamental qualitative transformation. (1) Only dialectics can explain *this* process as well, for only dialectics can explain change at all.

Structural assimilation is the kind of process where change takes place over a relatively extended period of time. It is possible to ascertain around when the process begins and after the process is all over it is clear that a qualitative change has taken place. However, *during* the process things are nowhere as clear. In fact in the middle of the process things are extremely

contradictory for *both qualities* — what existed before and what is to be — exist in a complex interrelationship. For this reason there exists *no one moment* when the qualitative change takes place. That the qualitative change has taken place becomes clear only some time *after* the change has been consummated. As the process can be frozen or even reversed — look at the cases of Finland and Austria — it is proper for Marxists to refuse to draw a final accounting on the process of structural assimilation in any particular country until it is more than certain that the process is completed. Thus, what has been considered a vice, the slowness of our movement in arriving at a conclusion on many of these states, was in fact a virtue.

The kind of qualitative change taking place is also the cause of the confusion over the exact nature of these states in the *early* stage of this process. The only kind of definition that can be given to such states in the early period of this process is one which recognises both the *transition taking place* and the fact that the transition is *not yet completed*. Since the transformation of the state is incomplete we must insist it has not yet lost its capitalist character. But since the process of transformation has already begun this capitalist character is expressed in a very weak — phantom-like, if you will — form. It is expressed not so much in the real existence of bourgeois power but in the fact that the existence of a new class power has not yet been consummated. Thus these states are *transitional* states which maintain a capitalist character only in the historical sense — that is, by recognising where they come from and that they have not yet gotten to where they *seem* to be going (but may not necessarily get to).

There is another problem — this one a *terminological* problem — which also gives us an insight into the nature of the process we are investigating. The term *structural assimilation* repels many because they interpret the term *assimilation* in a very literal sense of direct absorption into the USSR as a country. Certainly this was an important factor with Germain. In fact we were tempted at the beginning to simply discard the term because of this connotation given to it. However, the concept has a certain history in our movement, a history which should be revived.

The problem is very much like the problem Trotsky had with permanent revolution. He took this term from Marx's pioneer work on the German Revolution of 1848. Many of Trotsky's opponents sought to distort and discredit Trotsky's theory by literally interpreting the term. They insisted that Trotsky, in an ultra-left fashion, was stating that the revolution would ascend without any interruptions at all — without any ebbs or flows. But Trotsky persisted in using the term both because it was a link with Marx and because it did express what he wanted to get at — that the revolutionary process could not be limited to a single stage without causing its defeat.

Not only does the term structural assimilation provide a link for us with past work done by our movement; it also gets at an essential element of the process itself. In the fundamental *theoretical sense* all these states were assimilated into the degenerated workers' state which has its origins in October. They were transformed after the image of the degenerated workers' state, in an area where this state has essential hegemony, the motive force of the transformation being either the Soviet bureaucracy itself or its agents, its extension, the domestic Communist Parties.

There is another, related terminological problem. One of Pablo's original contributions to the buffer discussion was the coining of the term "deformed workers' states." Since these states were deformed from the very beginning, he reasoned, they did not go through a healthy state from which to degenerate. All this is, of course, true. However, it has led to the concept that deformed workers' states are the indigenous product of deformed revolutions; that is, that centrist leadership leads, not to the defeat of revolution, but only to the deformation of the end product. That this concept can only lead to liquidationist conclusions we have shown elsewhere.

Since these "deformed" workers' states can *only* be theoretically understood as extensions of the degenerated workers' state, they are as much degenerated workers' states as is the USSR. To give them another label causes no particular problem, though, *unless* it implies that there is something qualitatively different in essence about these states to distinguish them from the USSR. To many in our movement it does seem to imply this. Perhaps, for scientific purposes, it is best to consider all these states degenerated workers' states — born in a degenerated form precisely because they were born through the process of extension of the degenerated workers' state.

The Limits of Structural Assimilation

The major defect of all other theories of the post-war expansion of Stalinism is the inability of these theories to *limit* the process. As long as the creation of "deformed" workers' states is seen as the product of totally indigenous social forces, it is impossible theoretically to rule out such "deformed revolutions" wherever such social forces exist — that is, pretty near anywhere on earth. At best the proletariat remains in the running as a sort of contender with other social forces for the privilege of overthrowing capitalism — a highly unsuccessful contender at that. About the most such theories let us say positively about this contender is that the proletariat will do a cleaner, healthier job of it. Most anyone will prefer a dirty job that is concretely accomplished to the promise of a cleaner job.

Since the theory of structural assimilation explains the real nature of these social overturns, it allows one to state clearly under what specific

conditions this process can occur and what general role Stalinism as a world movement will play in the future revolutionary process. This is of extreme direct importance to the day to day work of our movement in all countries of the world.

This process of structural assimilation is not an *independent* process. It is essentially *dependent* on the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR. Stalinism, however, is not a revolutionary world force. Its essential role is *counterrevolutionary*. It supports structural assimilation *only* as a *defensive* mechanism against imperialism and only under conditions where no serious confrontation with imperialism takes place. Thus this defensive expansionism takes place with the acquiescence of imperialism and as a substitute for support to genuine proletarian revolution.

This defensive expansionism must be seen within its proper international context. It occurred in regions where the prostration of imperialism made it impossible for imperialism to seriously resist Soviet hegemony over the region. This was even the case in China where the United States openly abandoned Chiang Kai-shek. Wherever there is serious resistance to expansionism, the USSR opposes such expansionism as it subordinates everything to seeking a temporary modus vivendi with imperialism. Thus, rather than defend itself through support to genuine proletarian revolution, the USSR has resorted to a combined process of the social transformation of strategic border regions under its hegemony *and* seeking to achieve a modus vivendi with imperialism by collaborating with imperialism to prevent social overturn elsewhere. Thus the consolidation of imperialist hegemony over most of the earth's surface – itself partially the result of Kremlin policy – rules out structural assimilation on any serious scale.

There is another, in many ways more fundamental, limiting factor: the beginnings of a revival of proletarian struggle internationally. A fundamental characteristic of structural assimilation is that this process takes place only where the proletariat is relatively docile – during the *ebb* of revolutionary development. The peasantry can be controlled, but the proletariat is another matter. Nowhere did the process of structural assimilation take place when the class struggle was in ascendancy. Everywhere it took place where the working class struggle was ebbing, where demoralisation was setting in. To the extent to which the working class begins to play more and more of an independent role on the stage of history, the significance of such distorted bureaucratic processes as structural assimilation will become less and less. In the most fundamental sense the working class itself is drawing the limits to Stalinist expansionism by tightening the noose around the neck of Stalinism itself. Today the beginnings of the resurgence of the working class have already been expressed in the decline of Stalinism. Tomorrow they will express themselves in the *extinction* of Stalinism.

FOOTNOTE —PART VII

1. It should be kept in mind that this distinction between two kinds of qualitative change is *relative*. Any qualitative leap, if looked at closely enough, evolves in a series of minute changes, which one of which marks the qualitative change is difficult to tell. However, in comparison to other phenomena a real leap can be seen to have taken place.

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Aug 2014

On Wohlforth's 'Theory of Structural Assimilation'

by Adam Westoby

"In France, the prolonged stabilisation of the Thermidorian—Bonapartist regime was made possible only thanks to the development of the productive forces which had been freed from the fetters of feudalism. The lucky ones, the plunderers, the relatives, and the allies of the bureaucracy enriched themselves. The disillusioned masses fell into prostration. The upsurge of the nationalised productive forces, which began in 1923, and which came unexpectedly to the Soviet bureaucracy itself, created the necessary economic prerequisites for the stabilisation of the latter. The . . . upbuilding of the economic life provided an outlet for the energies of active and capable organisers, administrators, and technicians. Their material and moral position improved rapidly. A broad, privileged stratum was created, closely linked to the ruling upper crust. The toiling masses lived on hopes or fell into apathy.

It would be banal pedantry to attempt to fit the different stages of the Russian revolution to analogous events in France that occurred towards the close of the eighteenth century. But one is literally hit between the eyes by the resemblance between the present Soviet political regime and the regime of the First Consul, particularly at the end of the Consulate when the period of the Empire was nigh. Where Stalin lacks the lustre of victories, at any rate, he surpasses Bonaparte the First in the regime of organised cringing. Such power could be obtained only by strangling the party, the Soviets, the working class as a whole".

Trotsky *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism* (1935).

This introduction to Wohlforth's essay (1) is not simply an introduction. It also contains elements of defence, of amplification and sequel, and of critique and correction.

The expansion of Stalinism to form the post-war workers' states, and the new internal conflicts (such as the anti-Stalinist struggles in Eastern Europe, and the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution') to which it has opened the way have been widely commented on but little understood. This is almost universally true of bourgeois writers on the subject, who flounder between two poles. On the one hand a routine anti-communism subsumes events as different as the October revolution and the bureaucratic imposition of the European 'People's Democracies' under the single category 'Communist takeovers'. Other commentators cynically (and sympathetically) recognise their own image in the political methods of the Stalinist bureaucracies, especially in the anti-working class repressions in Eastern Europe—a recognition which reflects decades of experience on imperialism's part of treating with the ruling castes of the degenerated workers' states. (2)

The Theory of Structural Assimilation is written not from the standpoint of bourgeois political 'science' but of Marxism. Wohlforth's starting point is the analysis of Stalinism by Trotsky and the Communist Opposition in the 1920s and 1930s and the later extension of this analysis on the part of the Trotskyist movement during the decade after the Second World War. Wohlforth's theoretical foundations for *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* embody three connected elements:

- (1) that the entire post-war expansion of Stalinism in the creation of new workers' states should be understood as defensive extensions of the social gains of the October revolution;
- (2) that these extensions—whatever the extent to which they were propelled forward by mass revolutionary action—have formed part of a series of counter-revolutionary international settlements between Stalinism and imperialism; and
- (3) that Stalinism as a whole, therefore, retains its historically counter-revolutionary character, and that this character is reflected—in different ways—in the nature of the workers' states set up since the war, in each of which the working class faces the task of *political* revolution against their bureaucratic rulers.

Wohlforth's work develops a framework (based in its essential respects on earlier theoretical work of the Trotskyist movement) with which he proposes to answer some of the most important questions of modern history and of the part played by the Communist movement in it: What is contemporary Stalinism? What is its place relative to the basic classes of modern society? How has it changed, extended and divided? What are the internal forces moving it? And—where is it going?

We may make these questions more specific: When Stalin made his ill-fated pact with Hitler on the eve of the Second World War, (3) was this a 'turn' so unique and disastrous as to be unrepeatable? Or do the present day foreign policies of the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies contain the danger of future such 'alliances' which can open the road for imperialism

to launch another—nuclear—world war?

What are the material roots of the Sino-Soviet dispute of the last decade and a half? Are they the same as give to some sections of European Stalinism—Yugoslavia, Rumania—their 'independence' of Moscow?

In 1956 what provoked the Soviet invasion of Hungary, but constrained Krushchev to leave Gomulka in the saddle in Poland? If in 1968 Dubcek was brought to heel by Soviet tanks, is there also a risk that the same will occur in Rumania, in Albania, even in Yugoslavia?

What is the nature of Castro's dependence on Moscow? Is it correct to see the Cuban leadership as having been assimilated to Stalinism *after* having carried through a social revolution?

And one of the most fundamental questions of all—how was it possible for Mao's leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, always a supporter of Stalinism within the Third International, to lead and succeed in decades of revolutionary war and win state power in 1949? Why, in 1966 was the 'Cultural Revolution' launched—then ended in 1971?

Wohlforth's essay broaches some, but not all, of these questions. Part of this introduction is aimed at applying the tools he provides to events—like the 1956 uprisings in Eastern Europe—which he does not consider except in passing, or to those which—like the Sino-Soviet split or the economic reforms of the 1960's—had not taken shape when he wrote. To apply Wohlforth's tools it is necessary to know their origins, to critically evaluate them and to try to improve them. This is especially so in connection with the Cuban revolution. In *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* he denied that any social transformation had (in 1964) taken place in Cuba, maintaining that under Castro, as under Batista, it remained a capitalist state. But to understand why Wohlforth made this unjustified exception it is necessary to place his work within the internal political struggles of the international Trotskyist movement during the early 1960's. The closing part of the introduction sketches this context.

In one respect this introduction may claim to break new ground, in attempting a development—or, more accurately, a deepening—of the idea of 'structural assimilation'. Wohlforth poses the fundamental question: how can a supposedly counter-revolutionary political formation (Stalinism) carry out revolutionary social and political tasks—the liquidation of the national bourgeoisie as a class, the nationalisation of industry and the land, the establishment of a planned economy? At first sight the very question suggests that there is something basically, 'logically', wrong with the notion of Stalinism—that it is a counter-revolutionary political formation. But in reality the earlier history of society contains similar paradoxes. The history of *bourgeois* revolutions presents a very clear analogy—equally 'illogical', and equally, dialectically, real. After the French revolution of 1789-94, it was the regime established by the Thermidorean counter-revolution in France itself (the Directory, followed

by the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte) which proved to be the forcible instrument of revolutionary social overturns in many European countries outside France. And—by no means coincidentally—it was in Thermidor and the rise of the Bonapartist dictatorship in France that Trotsky sought his main historical analogy for understanding the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Therefore, within the first part of this introduction we outline the nature of Thermidor and develop Trotsky's analogy between Stalinism and Bonapartism, showing how it may help us understand—formal logic notwithstanding—how revolutionary social changes are carried out by counter-revolutionaries. In so doing we lay a basis for tackling the questions about the post-war development of Stalinism which we posed above.

TROTSKYISM AND STALINISM.

To encounter such questions is not, of course, to answer them—or even necessarily to recognise them. What distinguishes the Trotskyist movement from all other tendencies is that it has sought, from its earliest days of struggle against Stalinism, to grasp it scientifically, to set before the advanced workers a materialist account of the bureaucratic caste, of its social basis, of the ways in which it came to act as the agent of *international* class compromise and counter-revolution, and of the multitude of ties through which its internal crisis is connected to the crisis of the imperialist order as a whole. The foundation of the Fourth International and the adoption of the Transitional Programme sprang out of a decade and a half of political and theoretical struggle. Central to this was the study of Stalinism.

The Revolution Betrayed and other writings of the pre-war Trotskyist movement on the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern form part of the theoretical basis on which the Transitional Programme was adopted. In many ways it is the central element of that basis. Certainly it deals with the most important *new* developments of the period since the October revolution. Yet the real 'basis' of the Trotskyist movement is not and never was a 'theoretical' one. It is more accurate to say that Trotsky's writings on Stalinism gave the scientific, most conscious, expression to the class political character of the Communist Opposition, formed through the October revolution and the struggle to defend it. Only by seeing the analysis of *The Revolution Betrayed* as the work of a whole movement can one understand how it was the Trotskyists of the 1930s—and they alone—who combined the most precise and hostile criticism of Stalin's opportunist zig-zags as war approached, with consistent defence of the Soviet state and the essential gains it embodied. At the very moment when Stalin was signing his 'non-aggression' pact with Hitler (which more than any other single act set the seal on the invasion of the Soviet Union) he was executing Trotskyists (and others falsely accused of being Trotskyists) as 'agents of the Gestapo'. At the same time the Trotskyist movement itself

was entering one of the most serious internal struggles of its history—against those, led by Burnham and Schachtman in the SWP, who sought to surrender the class and military defence of the Soviet state. And this ironic parallel was not a superficial one; it expressed an inner connection. The essential reason why the Trotskyists were the most hated, persecuted and tortured victims of Stalin's police apparatus was that they were the only firm, communist voice speaking out against the real political 'fifth column'—seated in the Kremlin—whose policies were truly imperilling the Soviet Union and destroying the Communist International. The struggle against Burnham and Schachtman expressed that very strength of the Trotskyist movement which made it the historical enemy of the Stalinist bureaucracy: the fact that it turned its back on all temporary, opportunist tacks and set itself the task of bringing behind one programme the international, general interests of the working class. The blows from Stalin's murder-squads and the precious energies which the SWP leadership and Trotsky had to devote to the fight against Burnham and Schachtman during 1939-40 were two sides of the same coin, the price that had to be paid for a revolutionary Marxist grasp of the central political development of our epoch.

There is, therefore, nothing strange about the fact that the question of Stalinism has been at the centre of every important crisis of the post-war Trotskyist movement. What has now come to be known, often disparagingly, as 'orthodox Trotskyism'—which is to say the politics of organised, flexible, unrelenting hostility to Stalinism—was far from 'orthodox' at its birth. Despite being only a tiny minority it maintained that, far from being the number one instrument of Bolshevik world revolution, Stalin and his Comintern had passed definitively to the side of *counter*-revolution. Although its voice was almost drowned by the official propaganda of Stalinism, in concert with virtually the whole world's bourgeois 'public opinion', the pre-war Trotskyist movement nonetheless articulated the mute, confused experience of millions upon millions of workers in China, Germany, Spain, Poland and other countries who had been handed to fascist dictatorship by Stalinist policies. The revolutionary conception that the Trotskyist movement fought for and steadily maintained in the 1920's and 1930's—that the Third International had followed the Second to the side of coexistence with the capitalist order—is now, four decades later, a self-evident fact of world politics and the small coin of every bourgeois scribbler.

It may therefore be said—at the very least!—that the Trotskyist movement has had, from its earliest days, a much more lively and farsighted estimation of the development of world Stalinism than the 'theorists' of the bourgeoisie (and, naturally, than the Stalinists themselves). Jibes from our opponents regarding our sectarianism and factionalism, the smallness of our numbers, the numbers of our factions, and so on, are singularly

misplaced. In a period which has seen Nixon received as an honoured guest in Peking, and the Italian Communist Party support in office a Tory government of 'national salvation' headed by the hirelings of Lockheed and the oil monopolies, it is difficult to deny that Trotskyism's historical prognostications have been more ripely confirmed by events than even we could at one time have imagined.

We have said that in all the important crises of the post-war Trotskyist movement the question of Stalinism, of whether it retained its counter-revolutionary character, has been a central one. It would have been more accurate to speak not of several crises, but of a single crisis, unfolding in many episodes, in which the question of Stalinism has been the major political issue. In the split of the world Trotskyist movement which culminated in the autumn of 1953 clear lines were drawn between the 'International Committee' who wished, above all else, to defend the political and organisational independence of the Trotskyist movement, and (set against them) Michel Pablo's international leadership (the 'International Secretariat'), which they saw capitulating politically to Stalinism and threatening to dissolve the Trotskyist cadres into the Stalinist parties. Behind the 1953 split lay an extended discussion (1947-51) within the world movement on the class character of the Eastern European states, the Fourth International's turn towards support for Tito after his expulsion from the Cominform (1948), the expulsion of the majority in the French section (early 1952) for refusing to dissolve itself into the French Communist Party, and Pablo's adaptation to Stalinism during the French general strike and the East German uprising of 1953. The opposition to Pablo in the split of 1951-3 remained limited and 'orthodox'. It resisted certain of his theoretical conclusions and the immediate political accommodation to Stalinism which flowed from them, but it was unable—then or later—to put forward an alternative account of the post-war expansion of Stalinist state power. Yet this was the main empirical plank on which Pablo based all his conclusions. And since revolutionary theory, like nature, abhors a vacuum, the issues raised in the 1951-3 split continued to apply an unrelenting pressure. They were, quite clearly, involved when the 'International Committee' itself split in 1963, with the American Socialist Workers Party returning to political collaboration with the 'International Secretariat' (in whose leadership Michel Pablo had by this time been replaced by the superficially more 'orthodox' Ernest Mandel).

The main document published here, Tim Wohlforth's *The Theory of Structural Assimilation: a Marxist Analysis of the Social Overturns in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China*, was generated by the split of 1961-63. (4) At the time of the document's inception, Wohlforth was in the leadership of a minority current in the SWP, allied politically with the Socialist Labour League (SLL) led by Gerry Healy in Britain (and less intimately, with Lambert's Organisation Communiste Internationaliste

(OCI) in France which resisted the conclusions which the SWP leadership majority was drawing from Castro's revolution in Cuba.

But Wohlforth went further than this. He took seriously the charge, levelled by his co-thinkers in the International Committee, that the SWP leadership was going over to the essentials of Pablo's politics and he undertook to connect the discussion on Cuba and the colonial revolutions which was then going on in the SWP with the earlier discussions in the international movement on Stalinism in Eastern Europe and China. *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* was the main result. In the document Wohlforth attempted, after discussions and arguments with others of the SWP opposition currents, to set out a systematic and comprehensive political answer to Pabloism *through* giving an overall account of the development of international Stalinism since the war up to the time when he wrote. But these theoretical gains were almost entirely limited to individuals within the American opposition. Although the International Committee sections sold Wohlforth's pamphlet in a desultory fashion during the 1960's they neither took a position on it nor encouraged discussion on the questions it dealt with. The origins of the later disintegration of the International Committee are visible in the fact that, after the 1963 split, they again turned their backs on the problems of post-war history and reverted to 'orthodoxy' much as it had stood when Trotsky was murdered in 1940.

The promise of theoretical development which lay in the American opposition—a grouping *immediately* faced with the problem of giving political answers to Pabloism—was stillborn. (5)

'LOGIC' AND HISTORY.

The theoretical challenge thrown down by Pabloism's interpretation of events is also one used—in an infinitely cynical and dishonest manner—by the Stalinists themselves. A recent example illustrates the point. Mr. Monty Johnstone (the British Communist Party's professional specialist in anti-Trotskyism) has recently published the second part of his 'critique' of Trotskyism. (6) Leaving aside the falsifications with which it is awash, what is of interest is that Johnstone poses by way of conclusion the following question—how is it that, if Stalinism is a counter-revolutionary force it has almost uniquely been Stalinist parties which, in the post-war period, have overthrown capitalism? You Trotskyists, he says in effect, should put that in your pipe and smoke it. And he goes further, he draws—with some factional acuity—a distinction between the 'realistic' Trotskyists (essentially the Pabloite tendencies) who have faced (if not answered) this question and the 'dogmatists' who have turned their backs on it.

Needless to say, Mr. Johnstone himself offers not a shred of understanding of the post-war history of Stalinism, something whose contemporary existence he in any case denies! Incapable of confronting the self-evidently counter-revolutionary content of Stalinism he falls back on

evasions and, where these become too unwieldy, simple lies. But the question he raises should be dealt with. And it can be answered, at least in part, not by logic or theory alone, but by history itself. How is it possible, asks the 'logical' Mr. Johnstone, for 'counter-revolutionaries' to accomplish the forcible overthrow of social systems, and replace them by higher forms of society? Is this not indeed a logical impossibility? '... these (i.e. post-war) revolutions have taken place under the leadership of 'counter-revolutionary' Communist Parties, whereas the allegedly revolutionary Trotskyist organisations have *nowhere* succeeded in directing the masses' revolutionary 'urges' and leading them to revolution!' (7)

It is worth savouring the analogy with which Johnstone summarises his argument and, in the same breath, essays a spot of opportunist recruitment for today's Stalinism: 'If you looked at the record of a horse that had failed, despite persistent attempts, even to win a place in a single important race, wouldn't you ask yourself whether he hadn't got certain congenital defects as a race horse? And would you not be better advised to back one that had won a dozen races in the same period, even though he'd crashed some of his fences and had not yet carried off the Derby or the Grand National?' (8)

Yet the answer to Mr. Johnstone's question is that the real, dialectical development of history is no respecter of formal logic (and least of all Mr. Johnstone's 'horse-sense'). There have been definite circumstances under which the political representatives of the counter-revolution at the time have nonetheless 'exported' the social revolution into other countries. This happened, for example, in the years following the Great French Revolution of 1789, mainly under the armies of Napoleon Bonaparte, himself brought to power by a political counter-revolution in France. And it was the Trotskyist movement (note, Mr. Johnstone!) which grasped the analogy between Stalinism and Bonapartism and used it accurately to foretell both the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism and its disintegration. This analogy must today be developed and enriched.

Therefore, before we turn to the central section of this *Introduction*, treating of the main elements in the post-war development of Stalinism, it is as well to spend a little time on the analogy, giving at least a sketch of its usefulness for understanding post-war history.

If we wished to express the paradox of the last three decades in a nutshell, it would be this: that the Stalinist cancer which infected the proletarian social revolution has not been destroyed by the extension of the revolution, but, on the contrary, has extended with it. Not only that, but Stalinism has made itself the organising instrument of destroying capitalism and forming the post-war workers' states, in Eastern Europe, China, Korea, Cuba, (9) and Indochina, just as it has made itself the equally deliberate organiser of class compromise and counter-revolution in the states reserved to imperialism.

For three decades two fundamentally opposed forces, those of the proletarian *social* revolution and the bureaucratic *political* counter-revolution, have found themselves coupled together. This coupling is not an accident; it expresses within the development of a whole historical period the same bond that is essential in the sociological character of the Soviet Union as a *degenerated workers' state*: that the bureaucracy is a socially parasitic, politically dictatorial caste whose victory rests upon the existence—but results from the limitation, partition and prostitution—of the proletarian conquest of power. Trotsky thus expressed the contradiction (and at the same time the fundamental class character of the USSR) by his insistence that the Bonapartist (political) dictatorship of the bureaucracy rests on the (social) dictatorship of the proletariat, and not at all the reverse.

The tissues by which a cancer grafts itself to the body can maintain themselves in being through a period of the body's development, but only within limits, and with ever-sharpening tensions. The post-war period has been one in which, through the development of the economic boom and its passage into crisis, the internal forces which can break these bonds have been building up. The early results of these stresses can be seen at work in the fracturing and disintegration of the world Stalinist movement into antagonistic blocs, much as a scab heralds by its cracking the fact that it is about to be discarded by the growing tissues beneath it.

But the metaphor has its limits. Firstly, the Stalinist cancer has its roots not in this or that part, but in the internal contradictions of world society as a whole. And secondly the process through which the working class must cleanse itself of this growth has not simply an organic but also a conscious side. Not only a scalpel, but also a scientific theory of physiological development, is required for successful surgery. And it is a principle of science that events should be displayed as arising from the operation of general laws, not as exceptions to them. This is why Trotsky struggled in the 1920's and 1930's for an *overall* theoretical grasp of Stalinism.

It is therefore surprising that, within the post-war Trotskyist movement, the main historical *analogy* which Trotsky employed in understanding Stalinism, with the Thermidorean reaction and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte following the French bourgeois revolution in 1789, has been little considered and extended. Trotsky attached considerable importance to this analogy. In 1935 he wrote an article specifically to explain, correct and defend the use which the Left Opposition had made of the parallel in 1926-7. (10) It is an essential element in his dissection of Soviet society in *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936). And it is central to his polemic with the Burnham-Schachtman opposition of 1939-40 in the SWP over the class nature of the Soviet state. (11)

What makes neglect (12) of this analogy (an analogy which was an integral part of Trotsky's defence of the proletarian social character of the

Soviet state) doubly surprising is that such clear further parallels may be drawn in the post-war history of Stalinism. The study of modern Stalinism obliges us to return to this scientific analogy used by Trotsky and examine how far it can be extended.

TWO 'THERMIDORS'

The French Revolution not only removed feudal absolutism in France; in a series of revolutionary wars it destroyed such regimes in a large part of Europe. But by far the greater part of this 'export' of the French Revolution took place after the political defeat of the revolution in France: 'Thermidor' (the 9th Thermidor, the date on the revolutionary calendar corresponding to 28 July 1794) when the bourgeoisie guillotined Robespierre and Saint-Just and set about suppressing the 'extremist' petit-bourgeoisie and working class. Any attempt to divide the French Revolution (like the Russian) into watertight stages (such as revolution followed by reaction) or for that matter to hold it within fixed geographical frontiers, runs aground on the 'combined and uneven development' of the events themselves. In the revolution of 1789 it was the middle class and the bourgeoisie (the 'Third Estate') who overthrew the debris of feudalism. But in their struggle to consolidate their revolution (and to protect it against continued royalist conspiracy) they were driven further and further to the left. The Jacobin Republic of 1792-4 which executed Louis XVI was a bourgeois government, but of a most dramatic, unstable and atypical kind. Its main political fuel came from the *sans-culottes* of Paris: small artisans and shopkeepers, journeymen, apprentices, labourers and the unemployed. Under their pressure, it went beyond the purely political demands of 1789 to social measures against sections of the bourgeoisie itself, such as the 'Maximum' laws, limiting the price of bread. Robespierre's 'Committee of Public Safety' was in no way a workers' government—not least because no working class in the modern sense existed in France at that time. The left Jacobins formed a young and unstable bourgeois dictatorship, leaning dangerously for its survival on the newly awakened poor, whose demands it was unable to satisfy. To stabilise itself, the bourgeois republic was forced to strike out violently both to the right—against the aristocracy and the monarchy—and to the left—against the *sans-culottes*. 'Thermidor' was the blow at the left, but it was not the restoration of feudalism.

Napoleon was the ultimate inheritor of Thermidor, but it was the bayonets of *his* armies which enforced 'Liberty' and 'Equality' across the continent. Napoleon became First Consul, then Emperor, over the corpses of the left Jacobins and Babeuf. But he and his generals were themselves denounced as 'Jacobins', not just by aristocratic reactionaries, but by conservative spokesmen of the English bourgeoisie. (13) And for good reason. The *social* transformations brought about by the French revol-

utionary wars were indeed revolutionary ones. In 1815, when the crowned heads of Europe redivided the world at Vienna, they were able to restore much of the form of the old regimes, but not the content. The body of Europe had passed irreversibly from feudalism to capitalism.

The revolutionary wars between 1792 (when hostilities began between France and Austria) and 1815 (when Napoleon was finally defeated at Waterloo) saw the European bourgeois revolution flow down channels just as varied (14) as those which have swept away a series of capitalist states since the Second World War.

By the spring of 1793 (Louis XVI's execution in January providing the pretext for declarations of war by several states) revolutionary France (like the Soviet republic in 1919) faced a virtually united, hostile Europe. But twenty years of war and four military coalitions could not hold the French Revolution within national borders. The Austrian provinces which form present-day Belgium were the first point of overspill. France 'liberated' them in 1792, was driven out, but returned in 1794 to hold them for 20 years. The French commander, Dumouriez, attempted to balance the Belgian Democrats (who mushroomed in political clubs: 'Friends of Liberty and Equality') against the purely anti-Austrian right wing. He held back the Dutch Legion of democratic emigres from invading the Netherlands, hoping that Belgium could be secured by treaties in exchange for Holland. But when the government opened Antwerp and the Scheldt to commercial navigation (challenging British and Dutch interests in favour of Belgian and French ones) a general war became inevitable. Dumouriez was defeated and defected to the Austrians (in March 1793) but his defeat and treachery accelerated the revolution in Paris.

In the same period Russia and Prussia combined to partition Poland against 'revolutionary' infection. Warsaw was filling with political clubs dedicated to studying Paine's *Declaration of the Rights of Man*. A *quid pro quo* of the partition was that Prussia would maintain war against France.

But by 1794-5 the alliance against France was in disarray. The Dutch bourgeois oligarchy turned 'Jacobin patriots' to ally with France against the House of Orange, the political protege of Britain and Prussia. A Jacobin rising in Poland took Warsaw, but was suppressed late in 1794. Unsuccessful Jacobin conspiracies took shape in Vienna, in Hungary and in the states of North Italy. Wolfe Tone travelled to Paris to discuss the 'United Irishmen's' plans for insurrection. Even in Russia and the Balkans revolutionary agitations troubled the governments. In 1795 Prussia and Spain made peace with the French, opening the way to Napoleon's 'liberation' of North Italy in the first half of 1796. The French advance in the Po Valley brought city after city to the boil. By 1799 five republics stretched in a patchwork from the Alps to Naples. The Swiss Republic was brought together in 1798 under French military pressure.

Germany (where, as Marx pointed out, the theoretical aspects of the

revolution had progressed faster than anywhere else) lagged in practice behind the other states bordering France. But, having pondered the problem of freedom at perhaps too great length, the German intellectuals found themselves being liberated not by generals of a revolutionary republic, but by a French Emperor in person. Napoleon's victories of 1805-7 broke up the Prussian kingdom and formed a Confederation of the Rhine, wholly dependent on France.

Thus only in Russia and Spain did the basic social structure remain unaffected by the French armies. The French Empire—whatever the trappings of its national thrones—represented social transformation on a continental scale: some bourgeois political rights, but above all codification, reform and streamlining of the law, abolition of serfdom, freedom of manufacture, trade, finance and worship, improved transport, an end to corrupt taxation—all these made the middle classes and the peasants the social bases of regimes which were initially imposed by foreign conquest (15).

The parallels with Stalin's wartime and post-war policies in Europe (and in some respects with the Third Chinese Revolution) are more than superficial. We may highlight some of the most striking. When Stalin's armies and officials occupied Eastern Europe and Germany in 1944-5 one of their most important tasks was to suppress the local ad hoc organisations of Communist and social democrat militants which had sprung up as Nazism collapsed, and replace them with (usually bourgeois) appointees dependent on the Red Army and the GPU. At the same time Stalin's foreign policy and its agents in the Communist Parties were busy trading western and southern Europe back to capitalism. (16)

Similarly Napoleon (who had sealed his loyalty to Thermidor by suppressing the Jacobin clubs in Paris) advanced into Italy in 1796 in command of the French armies. As he did so the Directory endorsed a plan ruling out independent revolutionary republics there. When 'patriots' at Alba (near Turin, in Piedmont) proclaimed a republican constitution Napoleon repudiated them; it had already been settled that the King of Sardinia should continue to rule the area.

France's chief military opponent was Austria. The policy of Napoleon and the Directory was to buy her neutrality with territory. At the treaty of Campoformio (17) (October 1797) Venice—where a revolutionary assembly had replaced the old oligarchy, abolishing slavery and the ghetto—was handed back to Austria as part of a general settlement. One of the (secret) terms was that Austria would recognise French military rights west of the Rhine. The barter of Venice, therefore, was not only a stepping stone in Napoleon's career, it was also an element in the Directory's efforts to safeguard 'republicanism in one country'. As with Stalin's creation of the 'buffer zone' after the Second World War, they proposed to do this by securing France's 'natural frontiers'—announced as being, approximately,

the Rhine, the Alps and the Pyrenees. And like Stalin, Napoleon negotiated his victories not as a revolutionary leader, but as a broker in nations. Campoformio (universally unpopular among Italian democrats) had a sequel: the rising that broke out against France's annexation of Piedmont in 1799. Before they were suppressed by the French army the Jacobins of Piedmont (18) marched to the slogan of 'national sovereignty' but carrying portraits of *French* revolutionary martyrs—such as Marat (the *sans-culottes*' eloquent advocate of the 'despotism of liberty', stabbed to death by a royalist in 1793). Their—only apparent—inconsistency foreshadowed that of the Hungarian workers and students in 1956, who marched to confront Khrushchev's tanks beneath portraits of Lenin.

THE RUSSIAN THERMIDOR.

Historical analogy is of service to us only insofar as we are able to indicate clearly both its essence and its limits. This is doubly so when—as in the present case—we have to do with political and state formations whose essence lies in their acting as a limit and obstacle to the underlying revolutionary social forces. To avoid being mesmerised by the many surface points of similarity and parallels between the bourgeois revolutionary wars and the post-war expansion of Stalinism, we must direct our attention to the different social classes involved, both differences in their levels of historical maturity and in the relationships between them, and secondly to the different relationships of the state power and the strata who monopolise it to the economy and its social relationships. As far as the maturity of the classes was concerned, Trotsky clearly saw Stalin's prototype in Napoleon I, not in the latter-day Bonapartisms of imperialism in decay:

"The present-day Kremlin Bonapartism we juxtapose, of course, to the Bonapartism of bourgeois rise and not decay: with the Consulate and the First Empire, and not with Napoleon III and, all the more so, not with Schleicher or Doumergue. For the purposes of such an analogy there is no need to ascribe to Stalin the traits of Napoleon I: whenever the social conditions demand it, Bonapartism can consolidate itself around axes of the most diverse calibre.

From the standpoint that interests us, the difference in the social basis of the two Bonapartisms, of Jacobin and of Soviet origin, is much more important. In the former case, the question involved was the consolidation of the bourgeois revolution through the liquidation of its principles and political institutions. In the latter case the question involved is the consolidation of the worker-peasant revolution through the smashing of its international programme, its leading party, its soviets. Developing the policies of Thermidor, Napoleon waged a struggle not only against the feudal world but also against the 'rabble' and the democratic circles of the petty and middle bourgeoisie; in this way he concentrated the fruits of the regime born out of the

revolution in the hands of the new bourgeois aristocracy. Stalin guards the conquests of the October revolution not only against the feudal-bourgeois counter-revolution, but also against the claims of the toilers, their impatience and their dissatisfaction, he crushes the left wing which expresses the ordered historical and progressive tendencies of the unprivileged working masses; he creates a new aristocracy, by means of an extreme differentiation in wages, privileges, ranks, etc." (19).

The analogy with Napoleon, therefore, was basic to Trotsky's analysis of the social character of Stalin's bureaucracy and the political degeneration of the Soviet state.

But the parallel was no mere simile or instant invention. For decades Russian Marxists tried to espy the shape of their own coming revolution through a study of the French revolution—and of its degeneration and reaction. This was especially so with Trotsky, who repeatedly turned towards Paris in search of the key to events in Petrograd—and later Leningrad.

In 1904, in his polemics following the Bolshevik-Menshevik split, he likened Lenin to Robespierre, an autocrat standing above the masses, disdainful of their spontaneous energies. (20). In 'Results and Prospects' (1906), his application of the theory of permanent revolution to Russia, he distilled the experience of 'the revolution whose beginning history will identify with the year 1905 (when) the proletariat stepped forward for the first time under its own banner in the name of its own objectives.' (21) The historical limitations of the peasantry, the impossibility of their playing an independent political role are revealed by France as a *general* problem;

"In the revolutions of 1789-93 and 1848 power first of all passed from absolutism to the moderate elements of the bourgeoisie, and it was the latter class which emancipated the peasantry (*how* is another matter) before revolutionary democracy received or was even preparing to receive power. The emancipated peasantry lost all interest in the political stunts of the 'townspeople', that is, in the further progress of the revolution, and, placing itself like a heavy foundation-stone at the foot of 'order', betrayed the revolution (22) to the Caesarist and/or ancien-regime-absolutist reaction." (23).

Trotsky crystallised two key notions following 1905—that the proletariat, and not any of the petty bourgeois strata, are to form the driving force even of the democratic revolution in Russia, and (the dialectical obverse of this) that tendencies to internal reaction within the revolution will lean mainly on the peasantry and the intermediate social strata, beneficiaries of the revolution but not the active agents of it. These allow him to predict the social changes in the countryside which were necessary to consolidate the revolution:

"The proletariat in power will stand before the peasants as the class which has emancipated it. The domination of the proletariat will mean . . . recognition of all revolutionary changes (expropriations) in land relationships carried out by the peasants . . . Under such conditions the Russian peasantry in the first and most difficult period of the revolution will be interested in the maintenance of a proletarian regime (workers' democracy) at all events not less than was the French peasantry in the maintenance of the military regime of Napoleon Bonaparte, which guaranteed to the new property-owners, by the force of its bayonets, the inviolability of their holdings." (24).

Discernably prefigured in 1906, therefore, is Trotsky's much later analogy between Napoleon and Stalin. This is clearly so if in place of the guarantor of 'the holdings of the French peasantry' we substitute, that of 'the privileges of the Russian bureaucracy'—a substitution which spans two epochs and equates two distinct social strata, but nonetheless captures what is common to them—their conservative character, their inconsistency and particularism, and their consequent tendency to entrust their interests to an arbitrary, centralised and cynical state power—Bonapartism.

But the main thrust of Trotsky's arguments in 1905, and especially in 1917, was to stress the *differences* between Russia then and France a century earlier. In particular it was to combat the central illusion of Menshevism: that Russia, like France, must see decades of stable bourgeois rule between the democratic and socialist revolutions. October 1917 confirmed in resounding practice what had seemed merely theoretical assertion in 1905.

Thus it was natural that, after 1917, Bolsheviks who felt their revolution threatened by the isolation of Soviet Russia and the growth of bureaucratism within it should turn once more to see what further lessons could be learned from France.

In fact it was a self-taught worker Bolshevik, Peter Zalutsky, who first warned (in 1925) of a 'Thermidorean' danger in the Soviet Union. (25). During 1926-27 it was mainly the right of the party, gathered behind Bukharin and drawing strength from the recrudescence of capitalism under the New Economic Policy, who attracted Trotsky's fire as 'Thermidoreans'.

But Trotsky vehemently opposed the theory of the ultra-left that the Soviet Thermidor had already taken place, in the sense that he described it, of overthrowing the social gains of the October revolution. Stalin and his centre faction, at this time, were placed in the Opposition's theoretical dock mainly as 'accomplices' of Bukharin and the restorationist danger from the right.

This first version of the 'Soviet Thermidor', which at the time created such enormous heat in the party (26) was directed at showing that the Stalin-Bukharin line—national and international—of 'socialism in one

country' was in reality preparing the road for capitalism to return in Russia itself.

But as Stalin's 'left' offensive against peasant capitalism took shape during 1928, this version was thrown sharply in question. Was not Stalin now, in breaking with Bukharin and the pro-peasant and NEP right, adopting the very policies the opposition had advocated? And could the expropriation of rich peasants (no matter how bureaucratically and brutally carried out) really be described as a step on the road to capitalist restoration? These questions forced Trotsky to reconsider his view of 'Thermidor'. (27).

He did not abandon the analogy, but modified and deepened it in the light of Stalin's twisting policies and the violent consolidation of his regime. And it revealed a *closer* correspondence between the reactions which followed the two revolutions. In both France and Russia, Thermidor involved extreme political reaction, but not the restoration of the old *economic* forms. In 1935 he wrote a substantial essay to correct the analogy:

"Was Thermidor counter-revolutionary? The answer to this question depends on how wide a significance we attach, in a given case, to the concept of 'counter-revolution'. The social overturn of 1789-93 was bourgeois in character. In essence it reduced itself to the replacement of fixed feudal property by 'free' bourgeois property. The counter-revolution corresponding to this revolution (*my emphasis*) would have had to attain the re-establishment of feudal property. But Thermidor did not even make an attempt in this direction. Robespierre sought his support among the artisans—the Directory among the middle bourgeoisie. Bonaparte allied himself with the banks. All these shifts—which had, of course, not only a political but a social significance—occurred, however, on the basis of the new bourgeois society and state." (28).

This second version of the Soviet 'Thermidor' was basic to the analysis of Stalinism which underlay the foundation of the Fourth International and defined its attitude to the Soviet state. Near the end of his life Trotsky used it to defend the conception that the bureaucracy was a 'caste', a 'social excrescence', and *not* a new ruling class (against the 1939 opposition in the American SWP, who reacted to the partition of Poland by abandoning the International's class characterisation of the USSR). Trotsky by no means retreated from the analogy, but further extended and deepened it. It is worth quoting at some length the passage in which he does this, since it shows its remarkable power, when correctly employed, to foretell later developments—in particular the inexorable pressures acting on the bureaucracy to carry out the social transformation of whole states of Eastern Europe after the war:

"Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty

with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become a starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime; and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state.

It is more likely, however, that in the territories scheduled to become a part of the USSR, the Moscow government will carry through the expropriation of the large land-owners and statification of the means of production. This variant is most probable not because the bureaucracy remains true to the socialist programme, but because it is neither desirous nor capable of sharing the power, and the privileges the latter entails, with the old ruling classes in the occupied territories. Here an analogy literally offers itself. The first Bonaparte halted the revolution by means of a military dictatorship. However, when the French troops invaded Poland, Napoleon signed a decree: "Serfdom is abolished". This measure was dictated not by Napoleon's sympathies for the peasants, nor by democratic principles, but rather by the fact that the Bonapartist dictatorship based itself not on feudal, but on bourgeois property relations. Inasmuch as Stalin's Bonapartist dictatorship bases itself not on private but on state property, the invasion of Poland by the Red Army should, in the nature of the case, result in the abolition of private capitalist property so as thus to bring the regime of the occupied territories into accord with the regime of the USSR.

This measure, revolutionary in character—'the expropriation of the expropriators'—is in this case achieved in a military-bureaucratic fashion. The appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses in the new territories—and without such an appeal, even if worded with extreme caution, it is impossible to constitute a new regime—will on the morrow undoubtedly be suppressed by ruthless police measures in order to assure the preponderance of the bureaucracy over the awakened revolutionary masses. This is one side of the matter. But there is another. In order to gain the possibility of occupying Poland through a military alliance with Hitler, the Kremlin for a long time deceived and continues to deceive the masses in the USSR and the whole world, and has thereby brought about the complete disorganisation of the ranks of its own Communist International. The primary political criterion for us is not the transformation of property relations in this or another area, however important these may be in themselves, but rather the change in the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones. From

this one, and the only decisive standpoint, the politics of Moscow, taken as a whole, completely retains its reactionary character and remains the chief obstacle on the road to the world revolution.

Our *general* appraisal of the Kremlin and the Comintern does not, however, alter the *particular* fact that the statification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure. We must recognise this openly. Were Hitler on the morrow to throw his armies against the east to restore 'law and order' in eastern Poland, the advanced workers would defend against Hitler these new property forms established by the Bonapartist Soviet bureaucracy.

We Do Not Change Our Course!

The statification of the means of production is, as we said a progressive measure. But its progressiveness is relative; its specific weight depends on the sum-total of all the other factors. Thus, we must first and foremost establish that the extension of the territory dominated by bureaucratic autocracy and parasitism, cloaked by 'socialist' measures, can augment the prestige of the Kremlin, engender illusions concerning the possibility of replacing the proletarian revolution by bureaucratic manoeuvres and so on. This evil by far outweighs the progressive content of Stalinist reforms in Poland. In order that nationalised property in the occupied areas, as well as in the USSR, become a basis for genuinely progressive, that is to say socialist development, it is necessary to overthrow the Moscow bureaucracy. Our programme retains, consequently, all its validity. The events did not catch us unawares. It is necessary only to interpret them correctly. It is necessary to understand clearly that sharp contradictions are contained in the character of the USSR and in her international position. It is impossible to free oneself from those contradictions with the help of terminological sleight-of-hand ('workers' state' — 'not workers' state'). We must take the facts as they are. We must build our policy by taking as our starting point the real relations and contradictions." (29).

In the light of post-war events it is necessary to make two definite corrections to Trotsky's prognostications. The social transformations in Eastern Europe took place without the formal assimilation of these states into the USSR; and in several of them the 'appeal to independent activity on the part of the masses' in carrying through the social overturn was negligible. But only pedants would argue that these points—though important—vitiate the general line of Trotsky's analysis. On the contrary, it is not possible to understand the post-war world without setting his analogy to work again, studying how 'the real relations and contradictions'

have worked through in the world political arena.

Both Napoleon and Stalin represented regimes of unstable balance—the state raising itself up as armed arbiter over the classes—on an international scale. But beyond this point it is necessary to grasp also the differences. Napoleon represented the French bourgeoisie when it was far from having exhausted its historical role. He was the representative of a national bourgeoisie both socially *and* politically; he concentrated in his hands, on its behalf, the state and military power forged in the revolution, and used it to balance forcibly between the old regime, (supported by Britain as a rival bourgeois state) and the radical petty bourgeois and proletarians. These wished to press beyond the political conquests of the revolution and employ the state to satisfy the economic and social demands of the *sans culottes*, who had dethroned Louis XVI and sent him to the guillotine. For the French bourgeoisie, it was a question of balancing between—and settling scores with—the last phases of feudalism, and the embryo of the proletariat. Conditions of counter-revolutionary war, coupled with the pressures of recurrent crises in France, brought it to do this on an international scale. It thus broke the power of feudal absolutism and cleared the way for the development of capitalism well beyond the borders of France.

There is, however, this fundamental difference between the Bonapartist bourgeois state and even the most degenerated workers state. The bourgeois state serves as the policeman, the armed protector (and, in war, the forcible midwife) of capitalist production relations. Within these relations economic production takes place 'spontaneously'. But a workers' state must not only protect its socialised production relations, it must organise and plan, in day-to-day detail, the productive process itself. The state interpenetrates the labour process and the economy. In its revolutionary, democratic form this interpenetration is part of the process of disseminating state power through a politically active, self-ruling class and society and thence dissolving the state itself. In its degenerated, bureaucratic form it results in the growth of a vast, self-serving social layer of privileged functionaries, administrators, bureaucrats, cohering as a caste, set against the working class, organising and feeding upon the productive process coercively. The social transformations wrought by Bonapartism and Stalinism, therefore, are in a fundamental respect different. In the first case feudal restrictions on bourgeois relations of production are broken, and the new state power stands over them, guarding and enforcing them. In the second case political and military control, exercised by the bureaucratic apparatus, brings hard on its heels the necessity to transform the production relations—both to secure the state against imperialism and the native capitalist class, insofar as these continue to exert significant force, and to provide the foundations on which the bureaucracy (necessarily a much heavier segment of society than is generally formed by the bourgeois

state) can base, nourish and reproduce itself. This is the reason why—in all the different post-war 'revolutions'—Stalinism has taken power in the name of political tasks, but has soon found itself obliged to carry out the social destruction of capitalism. The political history of the Soviet Union was reproduced, but in an inverted form: first the bureaucracy captured state and military power, and only then, in a distinct development, did it turn to a social policy of transforming the base on which it rests.

This enables us to see why Burnham and Schachtman's 'bureaucratic collectivism' and its derivative theories of state capitalism are not purely and simply rationalisations of anti-communist pressures. They are also an empirical generalisation from the *appearance* of certain facets of this real process—most importantly the fact that the greater social weight of the state apparatus in a workers' state can and does, in its bureaucratic, privileged form, appropriate and squander a considerable fraction of the social product and give the impression—from a moral point of view—of being a new exploiting class. That this view is moral and not scientific is underlined by the fact that in real terms it leads historically backward, not forward. In 1968, with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, what was required above all was the clear call to prepare *political* revolution against the Stalinist bureaucracy in both Czechoslovakia and the USSR in order to defend the gains of *social* economy. But the International Socialism group (30) (supporters of the theory of 'state capitalism')—such was their confusion—even agreed to align themselves with forces which, under the cover of the political slogans of bourgeois democracy sought the overthrow of the *social* achievements of the proletarian revolution, and not only in Eastern Europe, but in the Soviet Union itself.

The form taken by the congenital centrism and political vacillation of the IS, though unimportant in itself, draws our attention to a matter of much more basic significance. It is that the Stalinist overturns of capitalist property relations in the post-war period have combined, for a time, the social and economic gains of the proletarian revolution, with the political defeats of bourgeois counter-revolution. In this too, it reflects the basic elements of the Soviet Union's own development (which in its most violent forms, has permitted the ideologists of 'liberal' capitalism to draw their false parallels between Stalinism and fascism). And it is this too, which is very correct and necessary in Wohlforth's essay (31) when he underlines the importance of the way in which Trotsky stressed the restoration of bourgeois political personnel and methods as Stalinism reinforced its grip on the Soviet Union in the 1930's.

At the centre of the theory of permanent revolution lies the idea that the tasks—especially the political tasks—of the bourgeois revolution can be completed only by the proletariat and not by the bourgeoisie. Parliamentary democracy, freedom of expression and of the press, the integrity of the individual, the equality of citizens, and the abolition of feudal bonds,

hereditary privilege and violence—in the hands of the bourgeoisie these remain *ideals*, at best imperfectly realised and serving to conceal, mystify and justify the exploitation of labour by capital. In reaction, when the bourgeoisie picks up the cudgel to defend capital, not a single 'democratic right' is safe. Yet the 'ideal forms' of bourgeois democracy, the universal character of state power, the making of politics into a public, general concern, all these express the historically progressive character of capitalism, the division and enormously expanded productiveness of labour, the greater and greater social collaboration in production, the creation of national and world markets. As such these political gains are elements in—and partly anticipate—socialist society. In this sense we may, with equal truth, invert the correct proposition that bourgeois democracy can only be *realised* by the socialist revolution and say that, conversely, the political concepts of bourgeois democracy contain, in embryo, the socialist revolution—and are therefore necessary but not sufficient elements of the political revolution against bureaucracy. Modern communism first took political form in Babeuf's 'Conspiracy of Equals' (1796), whose programme against economic inequality was put forward as the heir of the left Jacobins who were executed at Thermidor. The fundamental contradiction between democratic ideals and the existence of private property was captured in the Babouvists' slogan 'Stomachs are Equal!' And this, conversely, is why Stalinism, the regime of coexistence with imperialism abroad, and of privilege at home, must trample and destroy even the elementary formal democratic rights which imperialism, in periods of boom, has still been able to concede to the working class.

The two processes which have combined in the most important developments of post-war history—fundamental and progressive economic transformations; and extreme political reaction—are in a historical sense opposites. Their present *unity* is unstable, temporary, relative; their *conflict* is absolute. Numerous aspects of history demonstrate this. Whereas in Indochina and China, the native Stalinist leaderships *have* taken state power in a revolutionary war, this has taken place only after their attempts at compromise and 'stages' have inflicted the most colossal defeats on the revolution, defeats whose political content is by a reactionary irony, then 'exported' to the international working class in the foreign policies of the new holders of state power. At the same time the fact that the 'People's Democracies' are manifestly both arrogant regimes of privilege and bureaucratic dictatorship, and savagely *un*popular with the populations they rule, serves as a continual prop to bourgeois politicians in the capitalist states and as a factor disintegrating and forming a brake on the Stalinist parties in countries where they do not hold power. In this respect Peking Stalinism too has enacted the disintegration and prostitution of internationalism, without ever having inherited the political *form* of an international; the political contortions of the various 'Maoist'

tendencies and parties in pursuit of the zig-zags of Chinese state policy recall, in diminished caricature, the heyday of Comintern and Cominform obedience to Moscow.

And, from the other side, the economic development (and even the social stability) of the workers' states themselves increasingly runs up against the limits of a world economy hamstrung by its division into blocs, on one side thrown into chaos by the crisis of capital accumulation, on the other fettered by division into national economies and by bureaucratic mis-management. The Soviet grain crisis, the impossibility of a successful integration within Comecon, the isolated and jerky character of Chinese industrialisation, are problems that *cannot* be resolved by diplomacy, trade deals and purges, but only by the combined social and political revolution. What they express is not any inherent limitation of socialised property relations, but the fact that the world is rotten-ripe for socialism. The class compromises conducted by Stalinism in the interests of preserving capitalism are therefore a source of their *own* internal crises in the workers' states.

To return to the analogy between Napoleon's revolutionary wars and the Stalinist transformations of Eastern Europe, we should notice that Bonapartism, also a regime of forcible, but partial, reaction within the state apparatus, was similarly the political procurer of some of its own enemies. Napoleon turned the soil of European feudalism, anticipating Lenin by a century when he described his armies as 'l'état en marche' (the state on the march). But the *form* of this state, the fact that it had concentrated the legacy of the revolution in the hands of an absolutist despot, (32), was what permitted some of the German princes to march their peasants into battle against Napoleon under the banners of 'freedom and democracy'. And it is behind similar slogans—acquiring a new revolutionary content in opposition to Stalinist dictatorship—that many workers of Eastern Europe have taken up weapons against the Soviet Army in the first eruptions of the political revolution.

This fact—that the enmity of the European working class to Stalinism has already expressed itself in revolutionary risings: in Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968, in Poland again in 1970 and 1976—is one that gravely embarrasses Stalinists like Mr. Johnstone, mainly because such 'exceptions' form a regrettable obstacle to the Western Communist Parties taking their place as respectable members of the 'democratic' political spectrum. And—quite generally—Stalinism, in all its variants, is utterly unable to give *any sort* of objective or all-sided accounting of its own history and record. Instead it resorts—as Mr. Johnstone—to the sort of double book-keeping, combining philistinism and cynicism in approximately equal proportions, in which the Communist Parties (including the Chinese) are claimed as 'progressive' when they overturn capitalism, and the rest (Poland,

Budapest, Prague, as well as the bloody defeats in Indonesia and Chile) are quietly forgotten!

Trotskyism—the Marxism of today—rejects such falsifications. The working class requires the truth—real history in its many-sided, contradictory development. The scientific character of Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism is expressed in his use of the analogy with Bonapartism, sketched and extended above. Such use of analogy enables a Marxist—even compels him—to form an objective, rounded picture. He must test the limits of his parallel, avoiding points of superficial resemblance, examining each main feature of the phenomenon he is studying, bringing its detail into a *single* framework. Trotsky understood the degeneration of the October revolution by contrasting it with the 'classic' bourgeois revolution; Johnstone falsifies it via a fraudulently pragmatic comparison with . . . a horse-race! It is in the light of Trotsky's method that we must turn to the history of our own day. As we shall show, real history continues to demonstrate—decades after Trotsky's death—the objective calibre of the tools by which he understood Stalinism.

II. 'SOCIALISM' IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES.

"Some voices cry out: 'If we continue to recognise the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state.' This argument attempts to shock our imagination by opposing a good programmatic norm to a miserable, mean, even repugnant reality. But haven't we observed from day to day since 1923 how the Soviet state has played a more and more counter-revolutionary role on the international arena? . . . The trade unions of France, Great Britain, the United States and other countries support completely the counter-revolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie. This does not prevent us from labelling them trade unions, from supporting their progressive steps and from defending them against the bourgeoisie. Why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state? In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power. The difference in attitude in these two cases is explainable by the simple fact that the trade unions have a long history and we have become accustomed to consider them as realities and not simply as 'categories' in our programme. But, as regards the workers' state there is being evinced an inability to learn to approach it as a real historical fact which has not subordinated it to our programme."

Trotsky, *Again and Once More Again on the Nature of the USSR* (October 1939)(33).

Stalinism extended its rule after the Second World War over states whose population and combined social weight exceeded that of the Soviet Union itself. Wohlforth describes in some detail the process of political

assimilation (1947-48) by which Stalin, through the Cominform, completed the annexation of the parties and states of Eastern Europe to the USSR, giving each of them a monolithic political regime in which originally bourgeois parties, where these remained, became entirely subordinate to the political dictatorship of the Stalinists. But the process of 'structural assimilation' left the individual nation-states intact. It is important, at this later stage, to complement Wohlforth's account with a brief discussion of the way in which the economic effects of this process of assimilation, even three decades later, have in no way been to break through the limitations and pressures which faced the Soviet economy when it was the only workers' state, but to reproduce them upon an international scale.

After the social transformation of Eastern Europe, Stalin held out the prospect that Comecon (34) (the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) would become the organiser of a second 'world market' (35) extending and integrating the basic structure of Soviet planned economy. In the event, however, nothing like this Stalinist conception has been, or could have been, realised. In fact the notion of world economy becoming divided into two world markets, and allowing the development of the economic basis for socialism within one of them, is just an echo of the theory of 'socialism in one country' in opposition to which the Trotskyist opposition conducted its first struggles. Trotsky ridiculed Bukharin and Stalin's perspective (in 1928) that 'up to the complete world victory of the world proletariat a number of individual countries build complete socialism in their respective countries, and subsequently out of these socialist countries there will be built a world socialist economy, after the manner in which children erect structures with ready made blocks.' (36)

Yet this is exactly what Stalinism, because of its origins and its social position, has found itself driven to attempt. It cannot of course achieve such an historical mirage, nor has almost three decades of economic growth of the workers' states brought this synthesis into 'socialism' closer. The main features of economic developments, within and between the workers' states, show this clearly.

Economic planning and production has been organised on a *national* basis, reflecting the national boundaries and state structures negotiated with imperialism and resurrected by Stalinism in the immediate post-war period. The most basic instruments of economic policy and control—industrial planning, wage and labour policy, agricultural planning and food supply, the state monopoly of foreign trade and payments, the financial and banking systems—all these have developed in national forms, and moreover, in the case of eastern Europe, in national forms the majority of which were reactionary obstacles to economic development even before the First World War.

In the early years Moscow in effect imposed, in each country, national

planning for industrial development along Soviet lines: i.e. concentrating overwhelmingly on heavy industry (37). Plans were in a sense 'integrated' within each state but independent between them. State plans were highly centralised, drawing up physical targets of outputs and inputs for enterprises with all essential decisions and adjustments being made by a central ministry. Steel, and the immediately associated industries, (mining, fuel, engineering) become the cornerstone of the economy *in every state!* By 1950 the Korean war and the additional calls for military supplies had stretched internal margins in the Eastern European economies almost to breaking point. All the vices of the Soviet economy were duplicated in miniature; industry, enterprise and plant chiefs battled to fulfil their norms, and failures in one section (or simply wrong central assumptions as to the ratio between inputs and outputs) led to acute supply problems elsewhere. Thus, instead of a wider, more flexible division of labour, easing the bottlenecks which plagued Soviet industrialisation, Eastern Europe, too, saw the managers of industrial equipment plants also producing their own fuel and smelting their own steel!

The international economic relationships which *did* exist (many of them pre-dating Comecon) were dominated by Moscow's fiat that Eastern Europe should bolster Soviet reconstruction. Joint Soviet and national 'companies' in Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary and Rumania (38) produced largely for the Soviet Union. Whole factories in East Germany were shipped to the USSR. Polish coal was appropriated well below world prices to meet the Russian fuel deficit. Most trading arrangements were bilateral. There was (and is) no common currency of account; the restrictions on trade which resulted were partly eased by ad hoc trilateral arrangements, and then (starting in 1950, when Stalin demanded an upping of all industrial targets) by a growing network of two-way deals. But Comecon never acted as the organiser of an overall plan; as late as 1956 it had a staff of only 40, mainly occupied with the minutiae of statistics and contracts (39).

What is reflected in this is the contradictory social character of the Soviet bureaucracy and the states it had created. Economic planning and control had an arbitrarily centralised, coercive, police character, reflecting the political dictatorship of Stalinism, exercised through the bourgeois state apparatuses it had resurrected after the war. As a result economic planning was thoroughly inefficient and wasteful. All down the line of command functionaries battled to corner supplies and fulfil their 'own' output norms, regardless of the cost and disruption to other sectors, or of the internal efficiency of their enterprises. Accounting prices did not reflect (or respond to changes in) labour use, but were fixed, often arbitrarily, by the central planning ministries. Waste, manipulation, self-seeking and cynicism thus continued to proliferate (40).

Because Stalin could not simply 'annexe' the Eastern European states

into the Soviet Union, but rather had to reconstruct the capitalist state apparatuses (in 1944-45) as instruments to contain the working class, the nature of Stalinist political rule already acted as a powerful obstacle to extending the Soviet Union's own economic planning to cover them. Rather, reduced versions of Soviet economic objectives were simply 'exported' into each state as the social transformations were pushed through.

The notion of the 'structural assimilation' of Eastern Europe must therefore be understood in both of its—conflicting—aspects. The buffer states were assimilated into a single political and military bloc, but what they assimilated of the Soviet economy was not only its social relations of production, but also the national limits, narrowness and distortions of these, aggravated enormously by being compressed into much smaller frontiers.

The first decade of the Chinese workers' state presents some (but by no means all) of these same features. With, in this case, considerable Soviet assistance Mao's China set out in 1951-2 to repeat Stalin's drive to industrialisation from 1928—but having inherited a *lower* economic level in virtually every respect. Not only was output per head of every industrial product less than in the USSR in 1928, but grain output per head was less than a half, and arable land per head less than a third what was available in the Soviet Union (41). Thus, even more intensively than during the 'forced collectivisation' of Soviet agriculture, the Chinese economy faced savage food shortages and the imminent threat of famine. In addition, industrial growth, which was concentrated in capital-intensive plant (much of it imported direct from the Soviet Union) failed to absorb the unemployed in the countryside and when (in the 'Great Leap Forward' from 1958 on) an attempt was made to diversify industrial expansion into small, rural plants the output was often unusable. The Great Leap could not be sustained and even before (in May 1960) Khrushchev withdrew most of the Soviet Union's technical and industrial contribution, China was in a serious economic crisis, with emigration back to the countryside. From then on development was slower, limited both by the food shortage and (with widespread Western embargoes in force until recently) a chronic shortage of capital imports. 'Socialism in one country' asserted itself *politically* for China, through first a *dependence* on the Soviet Union—though without anything remotely resembling an international plan—then a traumatic severance of that relationship. China's foreign trade, for example, swung into dependence on the USSR and Eastern Europe in the three years 1949-52, then—in acute crisis conditions—even more swiftly back again after 1959 (42).

But if there is one single feature which, above all others, distinguishes Stalinist China's economic development from Russia's, it is the relationship to the peasantry and agriculture. It would have been inconceivable for

the Chinese Communist Party leadership to have launched in the 1950's anything like Stalin's 'third period' drive against the peasantry. Although they faced equally serious food shortages, the Chinese leadership were so heavily based, politically and socially, on the peasantry, that it would have been suicide to turn on them in such a way. 'Socialism in one country' has worked itself through in two very different forms. In both cases agriculture was the limiting factor on industrial development. Stalin discovered this as he was driven towards civil war against the kulak, and the virtual collapse of agriculture in some areas. But for Mao 'peaceful coexistence' with the peasantry was always a premise of policy.

THE STALINIST 'MONOLITH' CRACKS.

Understanding something of the economic structure of the post-war workers' states, produced by the nationally-based bureaucracies and the state apparatuses they set up, helps us to grasp the central cause of the mystery so much studied by bourgeois 'Kremlinologists'—the disintegration of the 'Stalinist monolith'. Before virtually all the political splits occurred the economic fragmentation was already there as part of the origins of the workers' states themselves, reproducing the type of state control by a national bureaucracy created by the Thermidorean counter-revolution in the USSR.

And we can see these same basic processes working through in the economic 'reforms' movement in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union during the 1960's. These were a series of domestic reforms aimed at relieving national pressures and crises, attempting both to head off the demands of the masses for consumption goods and to give the bureaucracies more effective and flexible control over the economies they ruled, with more adequate and useable information about them. Reform measures to rationalise and integrate relations among the economies of the different workers' states were completely secondary to these purposes. Where reform measures did bear on external economic relations they were generally directed at giving the economy (or the enterprise) greater flexibility and advantages from exchange with the *capitalist* world market (43), closer integration with other workers' states being secondary to this.

In fact, the historical origins of the 'reform' movement in Europe can already be seen in the situations which immediately followed Stalin's death, in March 1953. The political break opened fissures to the pressures beneath. Within a month of Stalin's death, the East German Politbureau asked the Malenkov leadership in Moscow for urgent economic aid, and to

reconsider Stalin's industrial policy. A week before the East Berlin rising (June 1953) they announced some concessions to deal with economic hardship; after the rising was put down, both income taxes and prices were reduced and working class consumption improved significantly. The rate of industrial accumulation was cut and reparations to the USSR were ended by 1954. In East Germany, though, the economic 'adaptation' to local conditions was not accompanied by political concession. In Hungary it was(44): Imre Nagy replaced Rakosi with Moscow's blessing in July 1953, with economic plans for increases in real wages, a cut-back in agricultural deliveries to the state, and a retreat on the overall collectivisation programme. Your socialism, Nagy promised Hungarians, would be 'cut according to your cloth'. Hand in hand with this 'New Course' went some relaxation (suspiciously opposed by Rakosi's majority faction in the Party leadership) in political oppression and the powers of the secret police—relaxations which were to prepare the ground for the Hungarian 'October' of 1956. Some measures of decentralisation in economic management followed early in 1954. In other Eastern European states—Rumania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia (where there had been riots at Pilsen in the summer of 1953) and Poland (where the 'national' Gomulka leadership had been evicted by Stalin in 1949)—milder, but similar national *economic* reforms, all of them including concessions to both workers and the peasantry, were started in the late summer and autumn of 1953. In all these cases, the national and reactionary character of Stalinism dictated the channels through which it attempted to meet its most pressing economic problems. Already in the early 1950's the vibrations of the political revolution in Eastern Europe began to be felt. They were brought forward, in time, relative to the Soviet Union by their combination with the intense, choked, national aspirations of the peoples of Eastern Europe—aspirations which Stalinism had blocked by appropriating to its own ends the *forms* of the old oppressor states, and imposing within them rulers obedient to another foreign power. And in response to eruptions, or the threat of them, Stalinism reacted in each case by trying to give the *national* bureaucracy, and the economy it controlled, greater possibilities of manoeuvre, but without relinquishing political power held *by* the Kremlin *through* their national agents.

All these reforms of the early 1950's, though, were secondary to the basic patterns established in 1947-8. They left intact a Soviet-type 'planning' model, only slowing accumulation, extracting a lower agricultural surplus and (in some cases) phasing out direct transfers to the USSR, as a means of meeting political pressures. As such they were very different from the main wave of 'modernising' reforms in most of the Eastern European states, and the Soviet Union, during the 1960's. These later reforms were essentially given their shape by the events of 1956: the uprisings against Soviet power in Hungary and Poland, Kruschev's explicit

criticisms of Stalin's crimes at the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet Split.

1956

1956 forms a turning point in post-war history and particularly in the development of Stalinism. In the events which exploded in Poland and Hungary—though in quite different forms—during the autumn of 1956 it is possible to grasp the main antagonistic social forces which produce the crisis of post-war Stalinist rule in Europe. Part of the background to them was the changes in Moscow. Malenkov never held a secure grip; before Krushchev definitely ousted him in early 1955 it is clear that Eastern European Stalinists were often interceding not with a unified leadership in Moscow, but with leaders of opposing currents. The Korean armistice (in July 1953) was not a sufficient easing of the Cold War to secure Malenkov's position; it was Krushchev who was to lead the steps in 'detente' (then called 'peaceful coexistence') of the late 1950's. But Krushchev, notice, removed Malenkov (and later denounced —without fully reversing— his policies of economic relaxation) in alliance with Stalin's Foreign Minister Molotov, the 'hard' representative of Stalinism. What Krushchev's rise to power in 1954-5 showed was the way in which the internal mechanics of Stalinism reflected its overall position as a regime of balance. Krushchev used Molotov's support to rid himself of Malenkov, then Molotov himself was removed in the drive to provide a new face. (Molotov, after ritual self-criticisms, was expelled *along* with Malenkov from the Praesidium (Politbureau) in June 1957 and sent to manage a power station in Siberia).

Krushchev's Kremlin had to perform its balancing act in the post-war period not on a single platform, but on a set of adjacent national platforms in Europe, platforms which had to be held in step, but needed at the same time some freedom to diverge in answering their own immediate pressures and crises. Each state moved, though, primarily in relation to Moscow; for several years after Stalin's death contact between the Stalinist heads of different Eastern European states was at a minimum, and the insulation also took such forms, for instance, as banning certain public statements of 'fraternal' parties in the press of their next-door neighbours (45). And the contrast between Hungary and Poland in 1956 sharply illustrates the pragmatic fashion in which Krushchev tried to secure his rule within the immediate, local situation. Nagy in Budapest was deposed (and later executed) when he found himself the figurehead of a revolutionary movement he could not control; Gomulka was tolerated in Warsaw because he promised, while allowing reforms, to ensure that anti-Moscow movements were held in check and that Poland remained within the overall military and economic framework of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon—most importantly Gomulka undertook to isolate the struggles of the Polish working class from the Hungarian revolution.

The tangled machinations which led up to the Hungarian 'October' of October-November 1956 really began in the summer of 1953, when Moscow installed Imre Nagy as replacement to the hard-line Stalinist Rakosi as number one in Budapest, but left Rakosi with an intact opposition, based on his leadership of the Party and the support of Party apparatchiks. Nagy's qualifications as the Prime Minister to announce the 'New Course', intended to defuse the growing tension, were those of political ambiguity. He had opposed the forced march to collectivisation in 1949, and been demoted for it. But he was a long-standing Stalinist, trained in Moscow, and it was he who delivered the obituary eulogy in the Hungarian Parliament the day after Stalin's death. He had, also, the relatively rare 'advantage' among top Hungarian Stalinists of not being Jewish.

But Nagy's first period in office lasted only up to the fall of Malenkov at the end of 1954. By the spring of 1955 Rakosi had ousted him not only as Prime Minister, but even from the position he had retained as Professor of Agriculture. During the whole of Nagy's period in office Rakosi had conducted an energetic, if veiled, campaign to obstruct and sabotage his policies. In effect the 'collective' leadership in Moscow, covertly warring among themselves, played one string against another in Budapest.

But although Rakosi was back in the saddle he was not firmly there. He was unable simply to strangle the forces released during the Nagy interlude. Not the least of these were the tens of thousands of political prisoners released from internment camps, many of them Communists purged before Stalin's death whom Nagy had restored to responsible state and Party jobs. Nagy himself was expelled from the party by Rakosi (November 1955) but he went on immediately to organise a loose opposition, including many Party members, around the positions on 'national communism' he was preparing (46). Rakosi was not in a position to arrest Nagy, nor could he suppress the seething oppositional discussions in the originally literary and academic 'Petofi Circles' of the Communist youth organisations in Budapest, which at this stage drew in mainly writers, intellectuals and dissident Communists. And very soon the situation was driven forward as details filtered through of Krushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes and frame-ups, in his 'secret speech' to the 20th Congress of the CPSU (March 14, 1956). At the end of March Rakosi reluctantly announced the rehabilitation of those murdered (under *his* supervision, as everyone well knew) in the Raik trials. Trying to retrieve a slipping situation, he accompanied further economic concessions, and the release of other political prisoners, by violent press attacks on the literary circles who were opposing him. But there were further blows. In the last days of June a mass strike of workers in Poznan signalled the beginning of the political revolution in Poland. And in June, too, a further joint declaration between Tito and Krushchev approving different 'roads to socialism'

spelled out the process of rapprochement between Moscow and Belgrade which had been under way since 1954. If Yugoslavia could have 'fraternal ties' with the USSR which did not involve KGB dictatorship, why not Hungary? It was the living character being taken by this question which drove Rakosi to prepare the arrest of Nagy and hundreds of his supporters in early July. But other—equally Stalinist—elements in the Central Committee drew back from this step, and appealed to the Soviet leadership. With Tito's public approval (47) Mikoyan flew to Budapest on July 17, removed Rakosi and replaced him with Erno Gero—known, among other things, as a GPU agent principally responsible for the murder of anti-Stalinists during the Spanish revolution! Rakosi (suffering reportedly from hypertension) resigned 'for reasons of health'.

Yet the new head rested on the same shaky feet—the secret police (the Hungarian AVH organised under the direct supervision of the KGB) and the threat of Soviet armed backing. Increasingly the mass of the working class gathered behind the inchoate, largely democratic and nationalist demands of the pro-Nagy opposition. But by the time Gero readmitted Nagy to the Party (October 14) the time for reshuffling the pack was past. When the government, having vacillated, decided to prohibit the mass demonstration of October 22 (called—among other things—to support the Polish 'reform' movement) it was impotent to act. 100,000 marched, behind banners of Nagy—and Lenin! As news came through of a broadcast by Gero attacking those 'who slander the Soviet Union' sections of demonstrators moved to the Radio Station, where they were met by the bullets of the AVH. As fighting spread through the city, Soviet tanks moved in. By the morning of the 23rd, Budapest was paralysed by a general strike and widespread fighting, and strikes had spread to the provinces. And . . . Nagy was back in the government, as Prime Minister!

This is not the place to give a factual account of the Hungarian revolution of 1956 (48). But some key elements must be drawn out. The treacherous role of the government figureheaded by Nagy, from October 23 to the second Soviet intervention on November 4, underlines more clearly than any other single event in post-war history the correctness of the Trotskyist position that only new, communist, parties will be able to lead the political revolutions in the deformed workers' states. While Nagy prevaricated on the key issue—the withdrawal of Soviet forces—the mass enthusiasm for him subsided into a cautious tolerance of his cabinet, which included many figures from the 'old regime'. Workers' councils sprang up, first in the provincial towns. They began to organise local economic life, yet still looked to the government for a national political solution. Temporarily the government retreated. By October 31, Soviet troops had disappeared from the streets. On that day, Nagy formed a new government with a majority of non-Communist members and announced

Hungary's 'neutrality' (i.e. as between the Warsaw Pact and NATO). But behind his back was being prepared the international line up which was to give Khrushchev a free hand to suppress the political revolution. Earlier in October, Eisenhower had sent private assurances to Moscow (through Tito) that NATO would not intervene against Soviet forces in Hungary. Tito himself had agreed to stand aside. By October 22 Khrushchev had accepted Gomulka as the chosen leader of the 'moderate' majority at the top of the Polish hierarchy, on the understanding that he would preserve the military and political alliance with the Kremlin, and restrain support for the Hungarian revolution. On October 30 Britain and France announced the Suez invasion by a joint ultimatum to Egypt. In all probability the final Soviet decision to intervene was made on November 1. That morning, Kadar made a demagogic speech against the 'political banditry' of the Rakosi clique. That night he had disappeared from Budapest. He was to return escorted by Soviet armour. Red Army movements continued throughout the country, and at dawn on November 4 a massive artillery bombardment was launched against key points in Budapest, followed immediately by assaults on the provincial centres. Shaken by the fraternisation that had begun to develop between Hungarians and Red Army infantrymen during the October intervention, Khrushchev and Co. set about the Hungarian revolution at arms length. Nagy and his supporters in the government fled to the Yugoslav embassy, when they were before long handed over to the KGB and eventual execution. Kadar returned to lead a 'Revolutionary Workers' and Peasants' Government'. But it took weeks, and an estimated twenty thousand dead, before fighting in Hungary had ended. And Kadar's puppet regime found itself obliged to negotiate for months with the Workers' Councils, and with the strike movements that continued well into January. Even when the government, backed by 200,000 Russian troops, felt strong enough to arrest the delegates of the Budapest Central Workers' Council on December 11, the capital was all but paralysed by a general strike the following day.

It would be impossible to understand the breaking of the political revolution and counter-revolution in Hungary without at least sketching the 1955-56 reform movement in Poland, which closely paralleled developments in Hungary. The fact that they came to a head at virtually the same moment (late October 1956) was far from an accident; it expressed the 'permanent', combined character of the revolution in Eastern Europe. The growth of a (largely democratic and nationalist) opposition in 1955 was pushed forward by Gomulka's release from jail late in that year. The Poznan strike (June 1956) was put down by army action (supported, among others, by Tito and by Togliatti, 'liberal' leader of the Italian CP) but strikes spread in other towns, bringing large sections of the working class behind the radical students and intellectuals. The repercussions of Poznan split the Polish CP leadership. The hard-line

Stalinist (Natolin) faction favoured political repression, wage concessions, 'detente' with the Catholic Church and fewer Jews in top posts. A looser grouping (round Ochab) proposed continuing political concessions, but not—at this stage—the restoration of Gomulka as being too sensitive in relations with the USSR.

In October, Workers' Councils began to be set up in numerous work places. These, most of all, brought the crisis at the top of the Party to a climax. Ochab switched support to Gomulka, and the Politbureau was rearranged under his leadership on October 17. An attempted coup by the Natolin faction was followed by initial mobilisation of Red Army forces within Poland. But Gomulka and Ochab threatened, in effect, to resist with the Polish national armed forces, and Khrushchev then retreated. On October 21 a Central Committee meeting confirmed Gomulka's new Politbureau (49).

Trading on his reputation as a victim of Stalinism, Gomulka set about restoring the situation to 'normal'. His first task was to restrain those who wanted a 'second front' against Soviet intervention in Hungary; his speeches condemned all forms of 'anti-Soviet agitation' and 'rabble rousing'. Then, gradually, he moved to strip the Workers' Councils, by a mixture of economic concessions and manoeuvre, of their power. Even so, it was not until early 1958 that they were formally subordinated to the party and the official trade unions.

In Hungary, Khrushchev used tanks and Kadar; in Poland, Gomulka (50). But the purpose was the same. And among those who recognised it were Cardinal Wyszyński and the CIA-controlled Radio Free Europe, both of whom urged support for Gomulka in the elections of January 1957.

We have concentrated on the 1956 events because they form a crucible in which can be seen many of the basic elements of post-war Stalinism. The Hungarian revolution refuted all those theories (such as Burnham and Schachtman's 'bureaucratic collectivism' or Pablo's 'centuries of deformed workers states') which attributed to the bureaucracy a long-term, necessary historical role, and the social and political stability which that implies. And, at the same time, it disposed of all the notions, which gained currency immediately after Stalin's death, of the possible 'self-reform' of Stalinism.

Every post-war eruption of the political revolution has demonstrated that to break the Stalinist dictatorship, their police and their monopoly of all the essential organs of state power, nothing short of a revolutionary party will serve. Yet in every serious struggle—Germany in 1953, Poland and Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1968, Poland again in 1970-71 and in 1976—the working class has found itself finally tied, by the absence of its own independent party, to the bureaucracy's offers of

reforms and 'democratisation'. But in the event, while day-to-day repression is less savage and widespread than it was in Stalin's day, *nowhere* are even the basic elements of workers' democracy permitted. And as far as the *splits* within the Stalinist movement are concerned, there is not a *single* 'opposition' leader who has fought to mobilise mass working class support behind him or to draw clearly the political divide between the workers' movement and the bureaucracy. This is true of Tito, of Nagy and of Gomulka. And, more recently and in very different situations, it is equally true of Castro, of Dubcek and of Ceausescu. The common factor in the political roads they have travelled is their attempts to achieve a new, particular, national balance of forces more favourable or feasible to the bureaucracy and the social strata which support it *within* their own nation state. Nowhere is the principle of 'non-interference' in the internal affairs of other states more rigorously observed than by the native bureaucracies of Eastern Europe when the essentials of Stalinist rule are involved. Neither Tito, Gomulka, Nagy nor Dubcek ever came near to appealing to the workers of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union for support against the Kremlin—on the contrary one of their first concerns was to reassure Moscow that a compromise would be feasible since they would never do any such thing. Tito's mild disapproval of the first Soviet intervention in Hungary gave way to unambiguous backing for the Soviet Army's artillery on November 4 (51). The first great division in the Stalinist 'monolith' was healed with the blood of Budapest's proletariat.

The Chinese leadership seem to have pursued—though even less publicly—a line similar to Tito's. Gomulka reportedly appealed to Mao during Krushev's visit to Warsaw on October 19-20, and Mao replied that China would not agree to a Soviet military intervention in Poland. A Chinese broadcast of November 1 contained a veiled warning against 'chauvinism by a big country' (52). But the CCP leadership gave full backing to the shelling of Budapest on November 4 (53)

Nevertheless, the rise of Krushev (in which the 'settlement' of Hungary and Poland formed a decisive step just as much as the 20th CPSU Congress and the ousting of his rivals) marks a qualitative stage in the development of post-war Stalinism, and it is important to define its outlines. 'Krushevism' signified the recognition by Soviet Stalinism that state power in the post-war workers' states could not be exercised direct from Moscow and that—depending on national circumstances—they would have to act in alliance with the new national bureaucracies, rather than simply treating them as their puppets. Soviet military and political power was to set the limits and the general lines, rather than the detail of national policies. But underpinning the growing 'independence' of the national bureaucracies was the Soviet army protecting them from imperialism and, more directly, their own working class. This 'devolution' of Soviet state power resulted partly from the pressure to find a general working relation-

ship which kept the 'Soviet bloc' intact, but also embraced the two most independent bureaucracies—the Yugoslav and Chinese. And on a more fundamental level it reflected—like the pattern of economic development after 1947-8—the reactionary political limits within which the European workers states had been formed.

Here again the analogy with Bonapartism emerges. Napoleon I re-established the thrones of Europe and populated them with his nephews and proteges, hung with trinkets and titles and wallowing in privilege worthy of the *ancien regime*. But not all the new rulers remained the mere mouthpieces of the power that had put them there. Similarly, the native bureaucrats whose autocratic rule Stalin established after 1947 developed their own interests and a certain—limited—national power base with which the Kremlin was forced to reckon. Within this process 'Kruschevism' represented a new stage of balance. But it could never be one of equilibrium as—in their different ways—the Sino-Soviet split and the international processes which culminated in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia were to prove.

ECONOMICS AND POLITICS.

It is important to bring into connection with each other the development of the economies and the main economic 'reforms' of the Stalinist states after 1956 (and their relationships to the main imperialist states) and the series of political splits and crises which these Stalinist states have undergone. The relationship between them is not direct or self-evident, but it is essential.

Two principal factors underlay the economic 'reform' movement in Eastern Europe and the USSR during the 1960's. Firstly, industrial growth especially in the more advanced economies, began to stagnate and fell visibly behind the rates of growth reached by the most rapidly growing capitalist states.

One of the main reasons for this was the centralised, bureaucratic character of economic planning. Physical targets of production and arbitrarily fixed transfer prices, taking little account of real costs, inhibited technological progress. And the more advanced economies—particularly Czechoslovakia and East Germany—began to run up against the natural limits to drawing an ever-increasing proportion of the labour force into industrial production. The most rapid industrial growth rates were in the less developed states—such as Rumania and Bulgaria—which started from a pre-war situation which was overwhelmingly agricultural. And agriculture itself lagged behind the West, the peasantry's hostility to state procurements acting as a massive social obstacle to collectivisation and modernisation. In the early 1960's total agricultural output in Eastern Europe had scarcely regained its pre-war level (54).

The second main factor sprang from the obstacles presented to an

integrated economy by the vested interests of the bureaucracies themselves set up—and now developing—in the national moulds laid down by Stalin. It was Khrushchev who took up (in 1962) a Polish proposal that Comecon should become not just a forum for co-ordination and bargaining but a body for supra-national planning, at least as far as major investment projects were concerned (55). This proposal, however, ran aground on the refusal of the Rumanian Stalinists to agree that future Soviet–Eastern European development should—in effect—shelve its particular plans for heavy industry and leave Rumania in her traditional place as an under-developed state of Europe (56). Their refusal was the starting point for the 'low-key' independence of the Rumanian bureaucracy, and their threat effectively to quit Comecon meant that its reorganisation (in June 1963) took place entirely on the basis of 'consultation' and the principles of 'unanimity' and bilateral agreements. Veiled political sniping against the Rumanians continued for some time, but in the situation following the Sino-Soviet split and Khrushchev's retreat over missile bases in Cuba, the Soviet bureaucracy found it impossible to bring sufficient leverage to bear. The political pressures which had led Khrushchev to permit (and even encourage) the national autonomy of the satellite bureaucracies, for the sake of holding together the Soviet bloc against the political revolution, acted in an opposite way on the economic structure, as an obstacle to any sort of cohesion.

It was, therefore, in the absence of any international planning that the various national economic 'reforms' of the 1960's got under way. The essential common core of the 'reforms' was the bureaucracies' attempts to do by external, bureaucratic means what a democratic workers' state would do by mobilising the knowledge, skills and initiative of the working masses—to encourage the efficient use of resources, flexibility within production processes and in the interconnections between them, and local initiative uninhibited by the threat of sanctions. Unable to employ the political self-consciousness of the masses for this end, the bureaucracies have turned mainly to the reactionary bourgeois aspects of these states—their bourgeois norms of distribution and the atomised, privileged, self-seeking social character of the bureaucratic stratum.

The most important elements of the reforms are:

- (a) the number of physical measures of output laid down in the national plan are greatly reduced, and these are specified in measures that allow more realistically for quality.
- (b) enterprises are allowed much greater flexibility in the prices they charge for their products, and (subject to minima) in the wages they offer.
- (c) the performance of enterprises is judged more by their net financial surplus and less by their total physical output.
- (d) enterprises are allowed to retain a higher proportion of their

surplus, and to finance investment out of it. Some self-finance is often a condition of additional state funds.

- (e) a significant part of the financial surplus of enterprises is given as bonuses, mainly to functionaries.
- (f) there is some relaxation (especially in Hungary and East Germany) of the state monopoly of foreign trade, allowing some enterprises to import and export directly and to accumulate Western currencies.
- (g) there is greater scope for private businesses in petty production and services, and for production by the peasantry for individual sale and use.

Within these general patterns there are great variations. Decentralisation and the recrudescence of private capital has gone farthest in Yugoslavia, where there exist, side by side with deep social underdevelopment (which it is illegal even to refer to publicly) 'dinar millionaires', mainly speculative get-rich-quick operators in the tourist trade during the boom. Hungary, followed by East Germany, has probably gone furthest in the direction of splitting up the state monopoly of foreign trade and decentralisation; Czechoslovak plans for this were halted by the 1968 invasion. Reforms in the Soviet Union, Rumania and Poland have left intact more elements of the 'command' type of planning (57) In Poland, Gomulka's attempt to increase food prices as part of such reforms led directly to the rising of December 1970, and his replacement by Gierek. The similar attempt by Gierek was beaten back by a national wave of strikes and demonstrations in June 1976 (58).

At the beginning of the 1960's the leaderships of Soviet and Eastern European Stalinism were faced also with important shifts in the world-wide relationships of *political* forces: most importantly the Cuban revolution and the Sino-Soviet split.

THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

The Cuban revolution of 1959-63 was one which was not sought either by Moscow or by the Cuban CP (which called itself the Popular Socialist Party), but in which they came, very soon after Castro took power, to play an essential role. It is important to distinguish clearly the different stages in the part played by Stalinism in Cuba partly because of the myths which now surround it both in Stalinist and revisionist 'histories'.

During the Second World War the CP was involved in an open 'popular front' alliance with Batista: they supported him in the elections of 1940 and 1944 and had two ministers (one of whom was Carlos Rafael Rodriguez) (59) in his cabinet. After the war they shifted their allegiance to another section of the bourgeoisie, Grau's Authentic party, until Grau drove them into illegality. After Batista's re-seizure of power in 1952 they remained in an ambiguous symbiotic relationship with his dictatorship. In

exchange for a kind of semi-legality they held in check the organised labour movement in which they held a dominant position (60).

In 1953 they denounced Castro's attack on the Moncada barracks as putschist and ultra-leftist. This, though formally correct, was done for entirely opportunistic reasons. In April 1958, by refusing to back a general strike which was called by Castro's 26 July Movement, they guaranteed its failure. At this time, however, a section of the CP began, through Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, to have contacts with Castro's guerrillas. Less than a year later (January 1, 1959) Batista fled and Castro's forces took Havana.

The rebel army, the 26 July Movement and the other smaller organisations which overthrew Batista were under a radical, nationalist petty bourgeois leadership. The bulk of the movement's support had come from the urban petty bourgeoisie and from the peasantry, though it also gained some base in the trade unions. After the revolution Castro's initial statements (reflecting the views of many of his closest supporters) were anti-Soviet and frequently anti-communist (61). He spoke of building a society which was 'neither capitalist nor communist'. In the 18 months after the seizure of power, he formed a coalition government with sections of the liberal bourgeoisie, though his policy of reforms rapidly frightened off the more right wing elements.

Castro's initial reforms were aimed at dismantling Batista's state apparatus and expropriating the great landholders and certain sections of foreign capital, especially the American sugar monopolies. Initially, the policy led to economic pressure from American imperialism. This intensified in step with the reforms, and as the liberals left the government. In the summer of 1960 the US broke off its agreement to buy sugar, the bedrock of the Cuban economy. The US also gave material assistance to armed counter-revolutionary groups. Then, in April 1961, Kennedy—evidently acting on highly optimistic intelligence reports, compiled by the CIA largely from Batista supporters in Florida—launched the disastrous 'Bay of Pigs' invasion which was totally routed by the mass mobilisation of the Cuban people. A few days later Castro was to declare the 'socialist' character of the revolution.

Over the previous year the Soviet Union had moved swiftly into an uneasy political alliance with Castro. This was cemented by the great economic influence which the Soviet Union acquired when, in 1960, it guaranteed (along with China) the sugar exports which had previously gone to the US. In 1960 over three-quarters of Cuban trade was still with the US; in 1961 over three quarters of trade was with the workers' states (62) And the Soviet Union had begun to grant large loans to Castro to cover the trade deficit.

During 1962, following the further nationalisation of US property in Cuba, Kennedy imposed an economic blockade—thereby deepening Cuban economic reliance on the Soviet Union. In this situation Cuba's political and social development came to be dominated by the problems of Soviet

policy as a whole: culminating in the Cuban 'missile crisis' of October 1962 and the subsequent 'settlement' whereby Kennedy promised there would be no further attempts to invade the island (though this did nothing to inhibit attempts at internal subversion, including a series of exotic CIA plots to assassinate Castro).

The 'missile crisis' of October 1962 had its roots in the complex political and economic crisis of the Moscow leadership and its relationship with imperialism. Khrushchev was still battling to secure his control in the Party apparatus, mainly through the selective 'destalinisation' launched at the 22nd CPSU Congress (October 1961). His attempts to boost agricultural production were unsuccessful; the Berlin crises and pressure from the military hierarchy for increased spending in Europe, together with the crash programme of missile construction, imposed a rising burden on resources. Khrushchev's promises to increase consumption could not be met at the expense of heavy industry, and when (in June 1962) hikes in food prices were announced there was at least one serious riot (63). On top of this Khrushchev's public claims that the USSR had equalled or passed the US in nuclear striking power were false (and were strongly suspected of being so at the top levels on either side). Previous attempts at 'detente' notwithstanding, Khrushchev was therefore under strong pressure to find a cheap way of compensating for the US advantage in inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and the ring of US bases in allied states around the Soviet Union—cheaper at least, than the enormous cost of a comparable body of ICBMs based on Soviet soil (64).

Hence the secret despatch (on Khrushchev's initiative) of 'intermediate range ballistic missiles' (IRBMs), much less costly than ICBMs, to Cuba in the summer of 1962. When fully installed they would have threatened effective retaliation against most major cities in the east, southern and central USA. But before they were set up ready for use, Kennedy, acting on intelligence reports, issued his October 22 ultimatum, imposed a naval blockade of Cuba, and brought to immediate readiness plans to bomb the missile sites and for a full-scale US invasion. Khrushchev, after six days of secret negotiation, was forced to withdraw the missiles, but with the major *quid pro quo* of an American 'hands off' Cuba (65).

That the plan to secretly install the missiles had its origin in Soviet world policies, and not in the defence simply of Cuba, was highlighted by—firstly—the fact that the proposal came from Khrushchev, not Castro, and—secondly—that alternative, more cautious methods of protecting Cuba against American invasion were not mooted. It would have been quite possible, for example, in the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs and with increasing reliance by Khrushchev on the deterrent effect of a major nuclear retaliatory strike, to have simply 'integrated' Cuba into the Warsaw Pact alliances, declaring that any invasion would be treated in the same fashion as, say, an invasion by NATO forces into East Germany. But no such

'costless' political steps were taken.

Relations between the Cuban leadership and the Kremlin were severely strained after Krushchev's retreat in the 'missile crisis'—reflecting Castro's recognition that the fate of Cuba was being determined in the wake of relations between the two super powers. The 'missile crisis' was handled direct between Washington and Moscow. It was brought rudely home to Havana that there could be no such thing as 'national independence'—'socialist' or otherwise—in one country.

Thereafter, however, the social transformation of Cuba continued in conditions of relative external security, though Soviet aid was not provided under conditions which would allow the Cuban economy to escape its traditional dependence on sugar.

In parallel with the development of the alliance with the USSR went a growing, but uneasy, intimacy between Castro's political forces and the Cuban CP. CP members had taken many posts at lower levels in the new state administration and from 1960 the Party began to move into a closer political relationship with Castro's government. But this was not based merely on Castro's growing economic and political ties with the USSR. The CP leaders realised that they could not maintain any independent following, given the immense popularity of Castro, unless they moved towards him. At the same time Castro required the support of the CP as the only serious organised political party at the time of the revolution. The organisation of the 26 July Movement was so loose as to be almost non-existent.

In May 1961 a first attempt was made to fuse Castro's movement and the old CP into a single political organisation, the Integrated Revolutionary Organisation (ORI). And in February 1962 Carlos Rafael Rodriguez became the first CP member to be appointed to a senior government post when he became the head of the Agricultural Reform Institute (INRA) in succession to Castro himself. But the ORI virtually collapsed within months when during 1962 the General Secretary of the organisation, the Stalinist Anibal Escalante, was denounced by Castro for attempting to seize power through 'micro-factional activities' and was exiled to the USSR. Although most CP leaders took their distance from Escalante, this event soured relations between Castro and the CP. A second step towards fusion was made in 1963 with the formation of the United Revolutionary Socialist Party (PURS). But this proved equally abortive. The result of these efforts, however, was to put a virtual end to any organised political activities outside the state bureaucracy. Political parties were in effect suspended. It was not until 1965 that the Cuban Communist Party was finally formed, entirely as a bureaucratic construction; it was not to hold a Congress for 10 years.

Despite the fusion of Castro's political allies with the Stalinists, Cuba's profound economic dependence on the Soviet Union and, from 1966,

Castro's public hostility to China, the political ties between Moscow and Havana were still not mechanically close. During the 1960s Cuban support for guerrilla struggles provoked splits in several Latin American CPs. The bonds were nonetheless very real, as 1968 was to demonstrate. The 'Prague spring' was reported by the Cuban press without comment. And even for three days after the Soviet invasion Soviet and Czechoslovak (i.e. pro-Dubcek) press agency statements were printed side by side. Then, after a long session of the CP Central Committee, Castro made a speech which, though bitterly critical of the inadequacy of Soviet assistance to Cuba (and to Vietnam), completely supported the Soviet invasion.

But already, weeks before this, Castro had given scarcely any support to the French general strike, and certainly issued not a breath of criticism of the French CP's role in destroying it. And after 1968 Cuban support for Soviet international policies became more and more close until by the early 1970s it had become sychophantically uncritical, although on occasions performing as a kind of licenced left face of world Stalinism.

Virtually all support for guerrilla movements was withdrawn. Castro gave more or less uncritical support to 'revolutionary' military dictatorships in Peru and then Panama. Allende's Popular Front government in Chile received political support; explicit (and still mild) criticisms were reserved for after its destruction by the 1973 military coup. Through all this period a string of visits took place by CP leaders from Latin America, Eastern Europe and eventually Western Europe, too—all of them were elaborately feted.

The Cuban revolution was the immediate stimulus to Wohlforth's essay—via the internal crisis produced in the International Committee by its disputes over Cuba. However, *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* does not embrace or discuss Cuba in any concrete way. This was because Wohlforth—at that time—acquiesced in the pressure brought by the Healy leadership of the SLL. Healy argued that to grant that a *social* transformation had taken place in Cuba, and that it had become a workers' state would be to concede that a political leadership *other* than a Trotskyist party could destroy capitalism and would therefore, be to capitulate politically (as the SWP majority leadership were doing) to Pabloism. Thus, argued the SLL leadership, Cuba had to be regarded as still a capitalist state, though of 'a special type'. Wohlforth, under pressure, finally accepted this position. In retrospect it is easy to see both the historically inaccurate character of the SLL's conclusion (more precisely, premise) and its purely formal, logical content, and also the basic flaw which it imparts to Wohlforth's essay, which is written so as to emphasise at all points the *differences*—even if they are not truly relevant—between developments in Cuba on the one hand, and in Eastern Europe and China on the other (66).

Yet in fact the basic thesis of 'structural assimilation'—that the social transformation of the post-war workers' states, and the establishment of

full-blown Stalinist bureaucracies based on the exercise of national state power, was closely connected with the exigencies of Soviet military and political strategy in maintaining its balance with imperialism—applies in its essential respects to Cuba itself. During 1962 Khrushchev sought, in the most direct way possible to use Cuba as a military point of pressure—like the 'buffer zone'—for defence and deterrence against the main imperialist states: the most obvious difference—important, but not *absolutely* so—is that Cuba is not adjacent to the Soviet Union. The post-war development of both nuclear fusion (hydrogen) bombs and long-range missiles made this, however, less and less of a crucial factor. Like the forces of production themselves the nature of state (and military) power, has taken on not just international, but world-wide contours. The great states exercise power not just within their frontiers but on a world-wide basis. In the Cuban missile crisis, for example, matters were settled (including the class nature of the state in Cuba) direct on the telephone between Washington and Moscow, with scarcely a reference back to Havana on Khrushchev's part.

The masses in Cuba provided the forces which enabled Castro to oust Batista, propelled him towards expropriating the landowners and capitalists, and formed the bedrock of popular support for his regime which made it impossible for any merely 'pump-priming' counter-revolutionary attempts (such as the Bay of Pigs) to succeed against him. But the political character of the Castro leadership ruled out their appealing, for the defence of the Cuban revolution, to the international working class. Like Stalinism, Castro's movement had national origins, a national outlook and, as it developed into a fully fledged bureaucracy, national interests.

Taken as a whole therefore, the Cuban revolution confirms, precisely in its 'exceptional' features, the general thesis of 'structural assimilation'. For all the talk of 'national independence', 'socialism in one country' is (and was even more in the early 1960's) an absolute and immediate economic impossibility. It was a question either of making peace with imperialism, or dependence on and integration with the Soviet bloc economies. Hand in hand with this went the *internal* political fusion of Castro's movement with Stalinism and, in due course, the complete alignment of Cuban with Soviet foreign policy.

THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT

It is futile to attempt to reduce the Sino-Soviet split—as do so many bourgeois commentators—essentially to a single pole: the 'doctrinal', the 'economic', the 'national' etc. The split took definitive shape only in a slow, covert, uneven process, visible in the period 1960-65 (67). Conventional accounts tend to date the split *either* to disagreements and conflicts over the Chinese Party's attempted economic 'Great Leap Forward' 1958-60, which culminated in the overnight withdrawal of Soviet aid and

technicians (in July-August 1960) or to the aftermath of Krushev's 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin at the 20th Congress of the CPSU (March 1956) and its repercussions on and in Communist Parties all over the world.

But the signs of Chinese Stalinism's independence of Moscow go back much further than either of these political turns. Ever since the 1930s they had exercised effective power in significant areas of the Chinese countryside in and from which they pursued military and social policies that were by no means directly dictated by Stalin. The CCP leadership conducted themselves similarly independently during the Japanese war and up to the taking of power in 1949. Differences were not aired publicly, but as with the Yugoslav CP during the war the possession of a military, territorial and economic base gave rise to local, national (and relative to Stalin, revolutionary) interests which could not always be reconciled with the requirements of Kremlin diplomacy and Moscow's part in world politics (68).

Less than a year after completing their control of the Chinese mainland, Mao's CP were faced with the brunt of the Korean war (69) (June 1950). From the autumn of 1950 Chinese troops faced the full weight of American military power, under conditions of boycott and isolation by virtually all states except the Soviet bloc. Soviet credits to China to finance the war were not given free, but in return for commercially priced exports to the USSR (70).

Chinese isolation from 1950 onwards made them very heavily dependent on economic and trade relationships with the USSR and Eastern Europe. The political pressure for a break was, therefore, something that could build up, silently repressed for a long time, only to erupt into open polemic after Soviet assistance was withdrawn in 1960—when there had already been economic recovery and substantial accumulation compared with the devastated state of the Chinese economy in the early 1950s.

The split was not something that suddenly sprang into existence fully-formed. It developed empirically and unevenly, through manoeuvres, veiled political attacks and occasional rapprochements on both a Party and a state level, over several years. It is false to claim that at any point either side saw it as a struggle for principle in the leadership of the world Communist movement. From the beginning each side handled it as a problem of great power diplomacy and manoeuvre. One consequence of this was that, in its early stages, the real split between Moscow and Peking Stalinism developed largely in the *form* of a dispute between the USSR and Albania!

From the late 1950's, as relations between Tito and Krushev improved after the temporary 'cooling' caused by the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the Albanian leadership threw in their lot with the Chinese and became their proteges, first politically and then economically. One of the

main factors pushing the Hoxha-Sheku leadership (71) in this direction was a progressive dilution of the Soviet defence of Albania against Tito's long-standing territorial claims.

Kruschev used the Rumanian Party Congress (June 1960) to issue a clear statement against the veiled criticisms of his diplomacy in the Chinese press (72), and accused the Albanian CP at the same time. Both the attacked parties defended themselves vigorously, both then and at the Moscow conference of 81 Communist Parties in the autumn of that year. Hoxha took the lead, accusing Kruschev of gross interference in the Albanian CP, backed by blackmail over promised grain deliveries. A common statement, 'incorporating' the Chinese and Russian positions, provided a facade of unity after the Moscow conference. But the Albanians, prodded by Peking, continued vociferous attacks on 'revisionism' and enthusiastically revived the 'personality cult' of Stalin. Their attacks pushed Kruschev to suspend—unannounced—Soviet economic assistance early in 1961, for the loss of which Albania was immediately compensated with large Chinese loans (73).

At the 22nd Congress of the CPSU (October 1961) Kruschev made the split explicit, with a public denunciation of the 'anti-Soviet' position of the Albanian CP (soon backed by the breaking of diplomatic relations). Chou En-Lai responded with an ostentatious withdrawal from the Congress. But only at the beginning of 1962 did the Soviet and Chinese chiefs start to prepare their party apparatuses for the likelihood of a fundamental split. During 1963 (i.e. after Kruschev's 'retreat' in the Cuban missiles crisis—October 1962—and the Chinese-Indian border war (74), and most markedly after the US-Soviet treaty banning nuclear tests, in the summer of 1963) border disputes were injected into the polemics (75)

What the Sino-Soviet split shows is that on the political, state, economic and 'ideological' levels both sides travelled along lines laid down by their national bureaucratic interests. Each side hardened its 'political' position against the other, and levelled their public accusations, only when they felt that the resources of back-stairs diplomacy, of manoeuvres for support among other national sections of Stalinism, and (especially on Moscow's part) of extreme economic pressure had been exhausted.

Thus, for example, the present Chinese position that a *social* counter-revolution took place in the USSR under Kruschev and that it is now a 'social imperialist' or even a 'social fascist' state came fully to the fore only *after* it became clear that Kruschev's removal (October 1964) was not going to bring any substantial concessions. Similarly, at the beginning of 1964, Suslov, Stalin's veteran 'theoretician', suddenly produced for the benefit of the Central Committee of the CPSU a fully worked out 'analysis' of the Chinese 'deviation'. The Chinese CP had, apparently, succumbed to a 'petty bourgeois, nationalist neo-Trotskyite deviation' and had deservedly won (he claimed) enthusiastic support in the Trotskyist move-

ment (76). Suslov's 'analysis'—which in terms of Stalinism's own history, provided a hundred times what was necessary for a final split—was delayed in publication. Why? It was only issued *after* a Rumanian attempt at mediation in early 1964 had collapsed—i.e. what in the Stalinist's book represented the most profound 'principles' were invoked only after another patching-up attempt had failed!

It is important to notice that the political results of the split were not simply to divide the workers' states into two 'camps', each as 'monolithic' as the previous single one. Krushchev opened (in September 1963) a campaign for an international conference of Communist Parties to pronounce anathema on the Chinese, but ran into grave reluctance from some sections of his own camp. The conference was in fact held after Krushchev's fall—in March 1965. (It is possible his inept tactical handling of this stage of the dispute contributed to his removal.) The Rumanian, North Korean and North Vietnamese Parties—as well as the Chinese — refused to attend and the Soviet leadership were unable to get agreement from some of those who *did* attend (such as the Poles and the Italians) to describe it as more than a 'consultative' meeting. At the same time the Chinese were driving through splits in a number of CP's in capitalist states, in some cases winning the majority. Thus the split, in shaking to its roots Moscow's previous grip of the world Stalinist movement, tended also to deepen the cracks along *all* national boundaries, well past the Sino-Soviet crevasse. In 1948, every CP leader in the world unhesitatingly jumped into line to call Tito a fascist. By 1969 Brezhnev and Kosygin had to cautiously negotiate the terms of their support against the Chinese from almost every CP leadership. And this process of change, with the 'bloc' becoming more and more like a mosaic, coincided with the increasingly direct dependence of economic development in each country upon the world market—a change which *both* the Soviet and Eastern European economic 'reforms' of the 1960's *and* the effective breaking of the previous single set of economic connexions into two trade blocs (China, and the economies dominated by the USSR) has helped to push forward.

STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION?

This whole process—the intricate 'cracking-up' of the Stalinist 'monolith' formerly completely dominated by the Soviet bureaucracy, is one which was still in its early stages when Wohlforth wrote 'The Theory of Structural Assimilation'. He nevertheless recognised its significance and accurately identified the causes of this 'cracking' in the fact that the fundamental loyalties of each bureaucracy—whatever the process through which it achieved power within the particular country —were to its own interests as a *national social caste*. The interests of different national bureaucracies, facing different domestic problems and a different set of pressures from and relationships with imperialism, will not necessarily co-

incide but will often violently conflict. The national interests which led Stalin to prostitute and then dissolve the Comintern are the same ones that in 1976 made it impossible for Brezhnev to get agreement among the western European Communist Parties on anything resembling a common political programme, and which meant that, during its short life, the Cominform was exclusively the tool of the Soviet bureaucracy's direct national interests (mainly against Tito) and had, for example, very little to do with the development of the Chinese revolution.

Studying the national, material interests of each bureaucracy in this way, Wohlforth is able to strip the early stages of the Sino-Soviet dispute (which in 1963, as we have outlined, had reached nothing like its later virulent form) of all its 'ideological trappings' (77) and the revolutionary posturing on the part of the Chinese leadership which so mesmerised public opinion (and some sections of the Trotskyist movement) at the time. And, for the same reasons, Wohlforth is able to point to the similarities of cause between the Sino-Soviet split and the Rumanian-Soviet dispute, then in its very early stages (78). In each case the split turned not on any issues of principle, but on frictions between the national interests (and also, in the Rumanian case, territorial interests) of the two bureaucracies.

Up to this point we have mainly been concerned with Wohlforth's discussion of the 'structural assimilation' of the states of Eastern Europe other than Yugoslavia. And, as he points out, this is the most fundamental element of his book. Having established his basic 'model'—of the degenerated 'extension' of the October revolution by, or on behalf of, the Soviet bureaucracy—he then undertakes to show how it can be applied (though with extremely important modifications) to Yugoslavia and to China—where (in very different ways) the conquest of military power and the social transformation of the state was carried out by the native Stalinist leaders, resting on their own control of sizeable armies during an extended civil war. He deals first with Yugoslavia, where Tito came to power on the basis of the armed partisan movement, and he concludes that, far from some 'distorted' repeat of the October revolution having taken place in 1944-45, (79) what really occurs, shows:

'Essentially, there was nothing peculiar to Yugoslav development (i.e. relative to the rest of Eastern Europe) other than a particular combination of (a) an almost complete absence of a viable capitalist class; (b) the existence in the early period of a powerful mass movement primarily peasant in nature, and (c) the existence from almost the beginning of a more cohesive and self-confident bureaucracy . . . Once the buffer in general is really understood there are no theoretical problems connected with Yugoslav developments in particular' (See above, p.62)

Wohlforth then goes on to use his discussion of Yugoslavia as a 'bridge' to show that in China, too, 'essentially' the same process was at work:

'We can therefore see that the *process* which took place in China *several years after* the coming to power of the CCP in 1949 was identical in *every essential* with the process which took place in the East European buffer including Yugoslavia. The social transformations took place not as a result of mass pressure nor in opposition to the wishes of the Kremlin. They took place essentially on the initiative of the CCP bureaucracy, from on top by military and bureaucratic methods, with the wholehearted cooperation of the Kremlin to fulfill not only the needs of the CCP bureaucrats for a relatively stable base, but also the needs of the Kremlin for a strategic buffer in the East. That extremely perceptive section of the SWP's 1955 resolution which refers to the basic contradictions of the Soviet Union being reproduced on Chinese soil can only be explained *theoretically* by the theory of structural assimilation' (above,p.75)

It is, most clearly, in these chapters on Yugoslavia and on 'Structural Assimilation in Asia' (which deals with Indochina, Korea and Tibet, as well as China) that it is necessary to take issue with the theory of structural assimilation as Wohlforth then set it out. It is best to do so by taking up some key aspects of events in Asia because from the point of view of Wohlforth's argument and method, Yugoslavia serves only as a bridge to scale and theoretical problems presented by the Chinese (and Indochinese) revolutions.

In an *Introduction* we cannot set out an alternative account of the Chinese Revolution or of China's subsequent history. But we can try to indicate some of the more important shortcomings of Wohlforth's approach and suggest some of the ways they could be overcome.

An important clue is to be found in an apparently minor false prediction, which—when examined—reveals a significant theoretical inconsistency. Discussing the Tito-Stalin split (largely healed by the time he wrote) Wohlforth says:

'The split of Yugoslavia with the USSR and its current improvement can only be understood when we recognise that this split was not definitive — that Yugoslavia never *fundamentally* left the Soviet camp. It always relied in part on the existence of its immediate enemy — the USSR.' (See above, p.62)

Wohlforth later extrapolates this into the Sino-Soviet dispute:

'However, despite their deep differences, all these states (80) are also *dependent* on each other and on the *USSR in particular* for their survival in a capitalist-dominated world. These conflicts thus remain essentially *within* the Soviet Bloc. For one of these countries to fully pull out of the bloc opens the door to either capitalist restoration or political revolution, both of which spell death to the bureaucracy. This is shown most clearly by the evolution of the most independent state of them all, Yugoslavia'. (see above, p.78)

In the light of the subsequent development of the Sino-Soviet split

this passage reads very falsely. While it is certainly true that splits between the workers' states increase the dangers of capitalist restoration, this has in no way acted to inhibit the great power nationalism of either Moscow or Peking. And, in the case of the Chinese Stalinists, they have already given 'theoretical' approval to capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union by dubbing it a 'social imperialist' state on which the workers are *worse* off than in the main imperialist states themselves. All this, of course, serves as political justification for Peking's 'turn' in the 1970's to seek political and military agreements with 'friendly' capitalist powers against the Soviet Union.

In any case Wohlforth does not dispute Trotsky's position that the Stalinist bureaucracy as a whole serves not as a good defence against capitalist restoration, but as one of the main factors increasing that danger. Yet his view that the degenerated workers' states must—'essentially', in a long-term historical sense—stick together 'despite the deep differences' is in contradiction with the other factor he quite rightly points to elsewhere in 'The Theory of Structural Assimilation'—the splitting up of the old Stalinist 'monolith' as each national bureaucracy seeks to pursue and protect its own particular interests. This was something he rightly detected in its early stages and we have tried, above, to show more fully the material reasons for it and some of the ways in which it has worked through.

Now, these two views contained in 'The Theory of Structural Assimilation', as a formal, external inconsistency, express in fact one of the most basic internal contradictions of Stalinism as a world system: although it arises from the degeneration of the proletarian revolution, it remains tied to the revolutionary economic basis first established by that revolution and it acts through the state power which controls the economy. Stalinism, in a word, has the first success of the world revolution and the formation of the USSR as its historical premise. Yet each national bureaucracy which, in its own right, takes or begins to take state power does so not as part of the international revolutionary movement of the working class, but in the attempt to secure, protect and extend its own national interests. These two sides of world Stalinism continually, necessarily come into conflict with each other. This conflict is, so to speak, *registered* by Wohlforth in *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, but the nature of this contradiction is not crystallised and developed; all the stress is laid on the common *origins* of national Stalinisms as an 'extension' of the Soviet bureaucracy and (more remotely, and in an opposite sense) of the October Revolution. This leads Wohlforth to underestimate the real, if limited, political independence of both the Chinese and Yugoslav CP's. His case that the offensive of the CCP to take control of China in 1947-49 was an 'extension' of Stalin's policy—rests mainly on a piece of evidence that suggests only that Stalin, retrospectively, recognised that the Chinese had

successfully ignored his advice and that, as in the result they were winning against Chiang Kai-Shek, he was not unhappy they should have done so (81). But to show that there was not necessarily a *sharp conflict* between Mao and Stalin in 1947 is not the same thing as showing that the *whole* of the world Stalinist movement, including the parties that have 'independently' taken state power, were merely extensions of the Soviet bureaucracy. In Yugoslavia, in China and in Vietnam, the native Stalinists fought civil wars for several years under conditions where they exercised a form—albeit sometimes a fragile one—of 'quasi-state' power: Tito in areas controlled by the partisans during the war, Mao in Yen-an from the 1930s, Ho Chi Minh in important areas of North Vietnam from 1948 on.

In China, the Communist Party had had the experience of a sort of state power for twenty years before 1949. They controlled a 'Soviet Republic' in Kiangsi (south central China) and smaller bases in other areas after the counter-revolution of 1927. The Long March (1934-35) carried Mao's army to the north where it again established its own political administration, based on Yen-an as capital, from which it was never dislodged either by Chian Kai-Shek or by the Japanese (82).

In each country, these bases became the foundations of the independent political development of the Communist Parties, and it was to prevent the destruction of these bases that they were forced, finally, after repeated attempts at class compromise, to launch all out struggles for military and political control of their countries as a whole (83).

This aspect, then, of Wohlforth's work remains the least developed and, potentially, the most misleading. But it is not a simple 'mistake' on his part—it arises out of the specific struggle in the SWP and the International Committee which propelled him to write *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* in the first place. Being aligned with Healy and Lambert against the SWP leadership's return to Mandel's International Secretariat, (84) Wohlforth had—reluctantly—accepted Healy's line that Cuba remained a capitalist state under Castro. One of the main aims of *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* in studying the *Stalinist* social overturns is therefore to try and show how different they are from developments in Cuba. And this being so, Wohlforth naturally felt the pressure to minimise the extent to which capitalism could be overthrown by movements politically independent of the Soviet leadership in centres more geographically remote from the USSR (85) and its need for 'defensive expansionism'. The obverse of this misleading bias, imposed by the specifics of the struggle in the SWP on *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, is to be found in the few passages where he writes explicitly of Cuba. Here he underestimates the role of the Kremlin leadership in claiming and using political controls over the revolution, as when he describes 'the Cuban Missile Crisis during which the USSR backed down recognising US hegemony over the Caribbean and showing how far Cuba really was from

meaningful incorporation into the Soviet Camp and how little it could rely on the Kremlin for protection'. (See above, pp 2-3) In fact, the outcome of the crisis was that Kennedy promised no future invasion or subversion of Cuba as the quid pro quo for its not being used as a base for Soviet nuclear missiles. Cuba, like Angola later, thus became an invaluable piece for the Kremlin on the chessboard of *world* diplomacy, a piece no less important—in the age of intercontinental missiles and global settlements between the powers—than the 'buffer' states of Eastern Europe.

III: WOHLFORTH'S 'THEORY OF STRUCTURAL ASSIMILATION' AND THE POST-WAR TROTSKYIST MOVEMENT

'Our opponents—and they are welcome—will seize upon our 'self-criticism'. So! they will shriek, you have changed your position on the fundamental question of Thermidor. Hitherto you spoke only about the danger of Thermidor, now you suddenly declare that Thermidor lies behind . . . We have indicated above the position of this error in our general appraisal of the USSR. In no case is it a question of *changing* our principled position as it has been formulated in a number of official documents, but only a question of rendering it more *precise*. Our 'self-criticism' extends not to the analysis of the class character of the USSR or to the causes and conditions for its degeneration but only to the historical clarification of these processes by means of establishing analogies with well-known stages of the Great French Revolution . . . Our tendency has never laid claim to infallibility. We do not receive ready-made truths as a revelation, like the high-priests of Stalinism. We study, we discuss, we check our conclusions in the light of experience, we openly correct the admitted mistakes, and—we proceed forward. Scientific conscientiousness and personal strictness are the best traditions of Marxism and Leninism. We wish to remain true to our teachers in this respect as well' Trotsky, *The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*.

Part of the task of this *Introduction* has been to defend Wohlforth's *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, showing how its essential conceptions may be further applied to the overall development of Stalinism since the Second World War and how these basic ideas themselves arise out of, and develop, the analysis of Stalinism made by the Left Opposition and the Fourth International in the 1920's and 1930's. Subsidiarily, we have also mentioned ways in which some of the key developments of post-war history and especially the part played by Stalinism within them, have been reflected within the Trotskyist movement itself. But in order to *introduce* Wohlforth's essay we must also show its particular place within the political life and problems of the Trotskyist movement. As Wohlforth himself

points out (in his Preface) the 'theoretical project on Stalinism' was 'rather intimately entwined with political struggles within the Trotskyist movement'—specifically those of the minority in the SWP during 1961-4 who opposed the reunification with Pablo and Mandel's 'International Secretariat'. And within *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* Wohlforth undertakes to show how the theories and views of Stalinism thrown up within the Fourth International, since the Burnham-Schachtman opposition of 1939-40, have reflected the pressure of class forces in the movement itself.

Fully to place the contribution made by Wohlforth's essay would require us to do what is still a task beyond our resources—to write the history of the Fourth International. But, in trying to bring out the peculiar importance of 'The Theory of Structural Assimilation' we shall at least get a clearer idea why writing the history of the Trotskyist movement presents such a daunting prospect. We can glimpse, negatively, the difficulty if we look at one overall attempt to set out the history of the International during its main post-war crises: Pierre Frank's 'The Fourth International' (86). It is written from the standpoint of a long-time supporter of the Pabloite tendency. For Frank presenting the history of the International is the main task; for Wohlforth it is an incidental purpose. But the difference in their approaches is striking. Dealing with the basic crises of the movement Frank minimises their significance and equivocates on their content. The narrative unfolds in an aridly chronological manner. You have the feeling he writes largely as an outsider.

In Wohlforth's much briefer passages there is a depth of engagement but, at the same time, a search for the whole story, the contributions of each faction and current, not only of those that he sees, in retrospect, as having represented 'the correct line'. He writes as a member of a movement and in studying its past he fights at the same time for its present strengths and its future successes. The sections where he discusses parts—key parts—of the International's post-war history are written in an essential connexion with the main analysis of Stalinism. Wohlforth explains the political developments in the SWP that drove him to the conclusion that the 'overwhelming majority of the SWP leadership . . . were in the process of adopting wholesale the method and theoretical outlook of Michel Pablo' (See above p. 1) , and from there to the conviction that:

'There is only one way to make even the most modest progress under such conditions. We must go back to the beginning and begin patiently piece by piece to properly develop a total theoretical understanding of the role of Stalinism in the post-war world. We must, in a condensed fashion, do the job which should have been done systematically during the past fifteen years, (i.e. from 1948-9 to 1963-4). So we return to the events in the Buffer (i.e. in Eastern Europe in 1947 on) and to the discussion round these events held in the Fourth International

between the Second (1948) and Third (1951) World Congresses (87).

And indeed the Trotskyist movement must adopt the approach of autobiography as much as that of external 'history', if we are to understand how our own past has made us what we are. All autobiographies which merit the name are written in a spirit of—more-or-less—enthusiasm for the present self. Their authors do not pretend to be able to step aside from today's standpoint. But good autobiographies are never mere apologies, presenting the alterations of one's career in the best possible light, nor are they simplistic 'confessions', contrasting an edifying present with the error and perfidy of former days (88). Neither are they some happy medium between these two extremes, combining a modest self-appreciation with warts-and-all honesty.

The reason for this is that real autobiography (like the movement's study of its history, and unlike mere memoirs or reminiscences) is no passive recollection or assessment, but an essential part of the life of the subject. Revising, reorganising, selecting, analysing and criticising from within the past you try to grasp how you have come to be what you are, what forces have shaped, driven and hampered you, what are now the possibilities before you and the problems to be overcome. No real autobiographer is the same man after he has written *finis* to his work as he was when he first put pen to paper. Similarly every serious attempt to assess the recent history of the Trotskyist movement marks at the same time a point of development for it.

THE 1963 SPLIT

In the crisis of 1961-63 within the International Committee no progress was possible without a re-examination of the past. The immediate issue was Cuba. The SWP majority leadership maintained that Castro's July 26th movement had overthrown capitalism in the island and had, moreover, created a workers' state largely free of deformations. To this position they added the observation that the International Secretariat seemed to have reverted to a largely 'orthodox' anti-Stalinism during the events of 1956 in Eastern Europe (particularly Hungary) and they drew the conclusion that the time was now ripe for a reunification of the world movement in the light of an apparent 'convergence' of political lines.

The French and British sections of the International Committee, though from slightly different standpoints, rejected this conclusion. Wohlforth supported them, though he became in fact almost entirely the political protegee of Healy and the British. But the *basis* on which the French and British sections resisted the moves of the SWP leadership revealed how incomplete and underdeveloped had been the split of 1951-53. They sought—the British most baldly of all—to *deny* that any social transformation had taken place in Cuba, and the main grounds they gave for this were

that *if* a non-Trotskyist leadership were capable of destroying capitalism, this would—logically—remove the historical justification for the International and make inescapable, in one form or another, political capitulation to the Pabloites, such as the SWP leadership were at that very moment busy on. The 'logic' of the issue was, of course, identical with that involved in the crisis of 1951-53 (except that Castro had not then—in the early 1960's—been so clearly politically assimilated to Stalinism). This was, in a distorted fashion, recognised by Healy and the British leadership when they insisted that Wohlforth and his supporters in the US must fight to inject the issues at stake in the 1951-53 split into the internal struggle then under way—i.e. the issue of building a Trotskyist cadre versus 'Pabloite liquidationism'. But what they did not do—and were unable to do—was to revive the theoretical questions that were swept under the carpet following the 1953 split, and that for the very good reason that they had gone with Pablo all the way on 'theoretical' questions of Stalinism up to the very eve of the split.

For Wohlforth and his supporters within the SWP, however, the political problems they faced could not be resolved quite so simply as the instructions from London and Paris suggested. For one thing, in the US (and in the Americas as a whole) Cuba was the number one political issue. While Kennedy was preparing the Bay of Pigs it was spectacularly more difficult to argue in New York than in Clapham or Paris that Castro was carrying out, essentially, no social change relative to Batista. At the same time references back in general, and in the abstract, to the 'Pabloite liquidationism' of 1953 cut little ice in the US, where the SWP leadership were manifestly *not* moving towards dissolution of the organisation, or anything like it, and where the Pabloite organisations had not, by and large, after 1953, liquidated themselves either. Insofar as it was correct to characterise Pabloism primarily as a 'liquidationist' tendency, by 1961-3 it was evident that this had to be understood in a political, not an organisational sense. The political dilemma of the International Committee in 1953 found organisational expression in the fact that those they had joined to denounce as 'liquidators' in 1951 had *not* liquidated themselves, but had continued to exist, in some cases to grow, and in any event by now represented *organised* 'liquidationism' and moreover organised—albeit slenderly—on a world scale!

This, of course, was only the surface form of the matter. Wohlforth was not in the front leadership of the resistance to reunification, but by his particular position in the leadership of the opposition *within the SWP* he found himself forced to dig deeper, in a theoretical and political sense, than either Healy or Lambert. Only in the SWP was there an internal *struggle*, involving the membership, over reunification. Wohlforth was not in the top echelons of the opposition to reunification, but he had the advantage of being in the middle of the fray. As he describes it he learned,

like 'most people', 'what they are battling over in the course of being banged over the head (theoretically, of course). The important thing is to develop during the course of the struggle, no matter how confused one may be in the beginning'. (See above, p.1).

And develop they did, this tendency in the SWP, although in a strikingly uneven manner. Wohlforth's initial position on Cuba (summer 1961) was that it *was* being socially transformed, but that this did not justify political accommodation to Castro by the SWP any more than the social transformations of Eastern Europe and China had justified the Pabloites' accommodation to Stalinism. From this he moved, in an uneasy alliance with the current round James Robertson that subsequently became the International Spartacist Tendency, to the production of a series of theoretical documents, of which *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* represents the last stage. Within this movement there takes place a very real development, and *at the same time*, a political degeneration. From concentrating initially on current events in Cuba, Wohlforth is thrust to 'wrestle with the theoretical problems raised by East Europe, Yugoslavia and China before I could get anywhere on more current developments'. The result was the attempt, set out in *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* to show how Stalinism, as a counter-revolutionary political and social formation, could expand to form degenerated workers' states over large new areas. This offered the possibility of placing the Cuban developments in an overall framework of post-war history, but in fact it did not and could not do so since Wohlforth in the meantime had consolidated his alliance with the Healy leadership of the SLL and had succumbed to their pressure to treat Cuba as still a capitalist state. And, in fact, the *absence* of any concrete analysis of Cuba is the most striking feature of *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*. It is at the same time the best evidence that while Wohlforth may have agreed to accept the advice of his seniors on Cuba (for the sake of a united opposition to the SWP leadership over reunification) he was—precisely because he was in the process of making scientific progress—incapable of 'assimilating' it into his work. Even within Wohlforth's own work, the history he is battling against repeats itself. Just as the SWP (reflecting the International) produced two separate positions on Eastern Europe in 1950 (89), one to show how Yugoslavia had undergone a social revolution, and the other to show how the rest of Eastern Europe hadn't, so Wohlforth promises, within *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, 'an analysis of Cuba separately' (See above, pp 1-2). For reasons which are now clearer, he could not fulfil the promise. And this *separation* of world developments into isolated parts, rather than treating them as a combined and uneven whole, is the number one political and theoretical weakness of *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*.

The other side of the coin is the way *The Theory of Structural*

Assimilation was treated in the British and French organisations. There is no evidence that the leadership of the Socialist Labour League ever discussed the document, or even read it. Certainly the gains it contained were never carried into a discussion involving the membership. They received Slaughter's lengthy methodological disquisitions against Novack and the SWP leadership, but nothing of Wohlforth's attempts at a concrete application of what he had learned (and that in important measure through the SLL leadership) of the last twenty years of history.

It is not an unfair summary to say that in 1961-3, while past events had placed Healy and Lambert at the head of the tendency of which both they and Wohlforth formed part, they were in fact holding him back from making the political developments towards which the practical and theoretical problems within the SWP were pushing him. And, along with theoretical indifference on the question of post-war Stalinism and Cuba went—naturally—a disinclination to take up again the discussion within the movement about the character of Stalinism which had preceded the 1953 split (the discussion which forms the subject of Parts IV and V and some other sections, of *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, and in which Wohlforth acknowledged in some detail Mandel's pioneering role in broaching the new theoretical problems of the post-war years). To have revived the substance (rather than just the result) of the 1953 split would have faced Healy and Lambert with the task of doing more than reiterate the 'orthodoxy' of 1953. Healy, for example, would have had to explain why, when he accepted Pablo and Mandel's views on Stalinism up to and through the Third World Congress in 1951—including the conclusion that Stalin had transformed Eastern Europe into workers' states—and never reversed this position even when (belatedly) he broke with Pablo on the question of *political* independence from Stalinism, (90) he now attached such crucial and dire importance to the idea that Cuba had been socially transformed under Castro.

The part played by the 'Cuban question' in the 1963 split turns into relief some of the most basic political problems within the Trotskyist movement. But it would be a mistake to equate the 'Cuban question' in 1963 with the 'Russian question' in earlier periods. Over Cuba the SWP and the USFI were, in a formal sense, correct on the class nature of the state. But this was about the only thing on which they were 'correct', and they were so, more-or-less, by accident. They attributed to Castro a revolutionary role, arguing that he followed 'the logic of permanent revolution' and that he and his followers thus formed some sort of unconscious proletarian revolutionary party. Thus, going by an examination of one state alone, in abstraction from the international role of the bureaucracy, they succeeded in attaching a formally correct label to Cuba, but only by undermining the International's political opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy and petty-bourgeois political formations. Neither the

SWP nor the USFI as a whole have ever corrected their political assessment of Castro, which is one of the clearest expressions of a Pabloite outlook within their ranks. There have been recent demands from within the SWP (91) that the leadership should describe the Cuban CP as what it is—a Stalinist party—and make a clear call for the political revolution to remove the bureaucracy. But these demands attempt—quite artificially—to heap the blame for adaptation to bureaucracy over Cuba onto the majority tendency in the USFI and in particular onto Livio Maitan, who has gone furthest in adapting to the Stalinist leaderships in China and Vietnam, as well as Cuba.

In 1963 the International Committee, on the other hand, preserved the 'orthodox' position on bureaucracy which they had held since the 1953 split, but only by burying their heads in the sand as far as events in Cuba itself were concerned. In both cases the result was a failure to get to grips politically with the bureaucracy—what was always the practical objective of Trotsky's two-sided analysis of Stalinism. And as far as the International Committee were concerned, to have gone beyond the abstract position of defending the *results* of the 1953 split would also have required them to re-assess their history as a whole—the swift and precarious character of the 'bloc' they formed against Pablo in the summer of 1953, and the fact that since then they had never succeeded in acting as an *international* democratic centralist leadership, but only as a federation of national sections.

Wohlforth, in 1961-63, addressed himself essentially to only one plane—the theoretical one—of this many sided problem. And his treatment of that was heavily marred by the attempt—unavoidable when we remember the circumstances—to deal with it in abstraction from the other sides of the question. It led him simply to accept—more or less on trust—an unsubstantiated chunk of Healy and Lambert's theoretical positions on Cuba. And it also led him to write largely as an individual, preparing 'a theoretical project' with the help and criticism of other individual comrades of the American opposition rather than for the theoretical re-arming of the international movement of which he formed a part. Thus Wohlforth allowed the work which culminated in *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* to 'lie on the table' of the International Committee after 1963. For all the talk from Healy and Slaughter of the need for theoretical development in 1963, Wohlforth's was by far the most important actual theoretical development, yet it remained the property of an individual, not of the movement.

This limited character explains also why Wohlforth's examination of the history of the Trotskyist movement since the war (or, at least, of key turning points in it) remained stillborn. Healy politely ignored Wohlforth's potentially embarrassing account of the contribution Mandel had made. Wohlforth allowed him to do so, and let it rest there.

To go back to the analogy with autobiography which we drew earlier, we may sum up by saying that Wohlforth, with the help of others in the SWP opposition, produced the embryo of an answer to the two main theoretical tasks which face the international movement today: to understand and explain post-war history as a whole, and especially the part played by Stalinism; and to assess the history of the Trotskyist movement within this, drawing out, consolidating and building upon every possible strength, even where these are the work of individuals who (like Wohlforth today) have themselves retreated from the development which at one stage they drove forwards. Wohlforth as an individual in 1961-3, could go no further than a blotted historical sketch, and autobiographical notes. To go beyond these are the main theoretical tasks now facing the international Trotskyist movement.

To underline their importance we cannot do better than point to the results of turning one's back on them—to be seen most clearly in the recent development of the WRP's 'International Committee'. Incapable of presenting honestly the post-war history of the International, the WRP produced (in 1974-5) a mendacious six-volume 'documentary history' (92) which aside from all its many incidental falsities tries to bury the past by effectively beginning only after the 1951 Third World Congress. This, in conjunction with the fact that Slaughter's brief passages of commentary on the (highly selected) documents portray the whole story as a series of heroic—and miraculously successful—battles by Healy and his disciples against the 'revisionists' in all their numerous guises, gives the whole work a ludicrously demonological aspect. It is rather as if the Church, in representing its past as the progressive triumph of organised virtue over the temptations of sin, nevertheless coyly refused to disclose what *actually took place* in the Garden of Eden, or how Satan ever got his foot in the door in the first place. Under such circumstances, it is only natural that the congregation should consist increasingly of the gullible and the cynical.

And in parallel, of course, it is inevitable that Healy's WRP and its 'theoreticians' should find themselves driven to the mutilation of post-war history, and in particular that of Stalinism. When the NLF took Saigon in April 1975, that revived essentially the same theoretical questions that had been posed in 1948-53, and again in 1961-63. How was it possible for Stalinism, a political formation which Trotsky described as 'counter-revolutionary through and through', to destroy capitalist state power? (and, in this case, in a direct and protracted military struggle with the greatest imperialist power on earth). By 1975 the atrophy of the WRP had reached the point that they answered this question simply by asserting that the Vietnamese Communist Party and its policies were *not* Stalinist, but represented 'revolutionary internationalism' and had done so since 1941! And, to cap it all, when the WSL pointed out that the Vietnamese

Communist Party had been a consistently Stalinist formation and that, in the August 1945 revolution, they murdered the Vietnamese Trotskyists in carrying through a treacherous compromise with the British and French, it was denounced as an enemy of the Vietnamese revolution. And (as if that were not enough) it was suggested we criticised the NLF only as a cowardly (and even racist!) substitute for attacking the WRP. The question of whether or not the Vietnamese Communist Party were Stalinist or not was answered simply with the rhetorical question—if they're Stalinist how come they made a revolution? (93) The wheel had come full circle.

It was in struggle against this accelerating process of theoretical degeneration, as well as against the political obstacles presented by the WRP leadership to a serious fight against the bureaucrats within the organised labour movement in Britain itself, that the founding members of the Workers Socialist League moved into opposition in 1974. After their expulsion Healy could scan his narrow, bureaucratic theoretical ruin and claim, with justice, to be 'master of all he surveyed'.

But for the Workers Socialist League, the scientific rearming of the international Trotskyist movement is a task as urgent and important as any. The republication, and the widest possible discussion, of Wohlforth's essay and the questions it raises is an essential contribution to this.

FOOTNOTES TO ON WOHLFORTH'S
THEORY OF STRUCTURAL
ASSIMILATION

1. Tim Wohlforth, *The Theory of Structural Assimilation: a Marxist Analysis of the Social Overturns in Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia and China* (1964), referred to below also as 'TSA'.
2. Wohlforth's theory of structural assimilation leads him to describe all the post-war workers' states as 'degenerated' (as the Soviet Union was characterised by the Opposition after the rise of Stalinism), rather than 'deformed'. The theoretical significance of this distinction is explained in TSA, p.89
3. On August 23 1939. On September 1 Hitler's troops invaded Poland. On September 17 the Red Army marched across the eastern frontier of Poland. By the 28, Warsaw had fallen to the Nazis and the partitioning of Poland (provided for in a secret protocol of the August 23 pact) was complete. For a clear account of the military destruction of Poland see Liddell Hart, B. *History of the Second World War* (1973), pp. 28-35. Robert Black's *Stalinism in Britain* (1970) gives a useful view of the feelings of Stalinist policy in the wake of the pact (see especially pp. 122-148).
4. Some aspects of the 1961-63 split and 'reunification' are discussed below, pp. 144 ff
5. The development of the discussion on these questions in the world Trotskyist movement, and its relationships to the crises and splits of the movement, are also raised later in this essay, pp 142 ff.
6. 'Trotskyism: A Critique' (*Cogito*, 1976). Johnstone disarmingly explains that the long delay in presenting his promised opus (16 pages long) was due to the 'extensive research' required to complete it.
7. Johnstone, *op cit*, p. 16.
8. Johnstone, *op cit*, p. 16.
9. In Cuba the role of Stalinism came to be central, though it was not at the time of the revolution in 1959. See below pp.129-134
10. *The Workers State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism*, published with *The Class Nature of the Soviet State* (London, 1973).
11. See especially 'The USSR in War', to which we return below. This article of September 25, 1939, i.e. a month after the Stalin-Hitler pact, is reprinted in *In Defence of Marxism* (London, 1971) pp. 3-26.
12. A significant exception to this neglect is Isaac Deutscher, who employs and extends the parallel between Stalin and Napoleon as bringers of 'revolution

from above', both in his biography of Stalin (Penguin ed. especially pp. 539-40) and in the essays 'Two Revolutions' (1950) and 'The ex-Communist's Conscience' (1950) in *Heretics and Renegades* (London, 1969). And the comparison between the Russian and French revolutions is a recurring theme in his majestic biography of Trotsky. Deutscher, however, (not then a member of the Trotskyist movement, though influencing sections of it) writes primarily as a literary figure and 'student' of world history, not as a communist thinker. As a result, he draws his parallels in a manner which, while always stimulating, is too loose and speculative to be a guide to revolutionary struggle.

In 1967 (in the Introduction to their edition of Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed* published in that year) the SLL attacked Deutscher for criticising (in *The Prophet Outcast*, the third part of his biography of Trotsky) the precise use which Trotsky made of the analogy between Stalinism and Thermidor in the 1930's. But the SLL's Introduction, after remarking that "In the last quarter of a century events have taken place in the USSR and in the area of the class struggle which Trotsky could not possibly have foreseen" (p. viii) goes on to say nothing concrete whatsoever about them. Far from pursuing Trotsky's analogy with Bonapartism, it goes on to denigrate Deutscher by associating him with theories of 'state capitalism'. And although that Introduction remarks in passing that the Soviet bureaucracy "had to overthrow capitalist property relations in the 'People's Democracies'" (p. xvi) it at no point mentions Wohlforth's work (though it was being sold at the SLL cadre camp that summer).

13. For example, Edmund Burke who defended the American colonists, bitterly opposed any settlement with Jacobin France: "If I had but one hour to live, I would employ it in decrying this wretched system, and die with my pen in my hand to mark out the dreadful consequences of receiving an arrangement of Empire dictated by the despotism of Regicide to my own Country, and to the Lawful Sovereigns of the Christian World." (*Letters on a Regicide Peace*, 1796). Burke's hostility is in no way tempered by his observation that the politicians of the Directory, in contrast to the Jacobins of 1793, are 'powdered and perfumed, and ribbanded and sashed and plumed'.
14. It is not only the complexity and wealth of this period of European upheavals (1789-1815) which has called forth such a mountain of writing upon it. The bourgeois historians are hypnotised by it because it shows more clearly than any other period the revolutionary origins of their world, and because it contains, clearly visible, the germs of the revolutionary successor of capitalism. But the idealism of most bourgeois historians founders on this question: if the French Revolution was the realisation of certain ideal principles ('democracy', 'the nation', 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity') why did these have to be enforced by the armies of a Corsican despot in alliance with the Tsar? And why, when these 'principles' were buried by the restoration of reaction, did Europe nevertheless remain irreversibly altered?

Few Marxists have written in detail on the French revolutionary wars. There is, however, an excellent essay (of c1910) by Franz Mehring on 'The French Revolution and its Consequences' dealing mainly with the effects on the German states (see Mehring *F. Absolutism and Revolution in Germany*, New Park, 1975, Chapter III). The matter is also treated in by Daniel Guerin (a former Trotskyist) in his *La lutte des classes sous la premiere Republique 1793-1797* ('The Class Struggle in the First Republic 1793-97') (1946). In 1969 Guerin published the original introduction (written in 1944) for the 1946 edition, but not in fact published with it: *La Revolution Francaise et nous* (The French Revolution and Us), (1969). Here he drew a general parallel between the French Revolutionary Wars and the Second World War, insofar as in both cases war between states was combined with revolutionary struggle between classes and "The bourgeoisie [once Hitler was clearly defeated] . . . seeks to disarm the popular masses which it had to arouse and arm to defeat the external enemy." (p. 80). But Guerin does not discuss the role of the Soviet Union, except to say it is "an absolutely new factor . . . which, to a certain extent, alters the premises of the problem". (p. 78). In the revised and enlarged edition (1968) of *La lutte des classes 1793-97*, which contains replies in controversy since the first edition,

Guerin takes up a number of parallels between the French and Russian revolutions, but not that of the social transformation of other states. By this time Guerin was tending to anarchist positions, and one of his main concerns was to puncture the recent glorification of Robespierre by Stalinist and near-Stalinist historians of the French revolution (particularly Georges Lefebvre and Albert Soboul) who saw in him both an anticipation of Stalinism in the USSR, and the hero of an anachronistic 'popular front' with the Parisian sans-culottes of 1793-94. (See Guerin (1968), especially Volume II, *Postface* and *Complements*). And of course Trotsky continually draws parallels with the French Revolution (especially in the period of its ascent, up to 1794) in his *History of the Russian Revolution*.

15. A recent general history of the period well summarises its results: "wherever Napoleon's armies had passed, the French Civil Code had been implanted, the administration had been overhauled, pockets of ecclesiastical and seigneurial justice had been uprooted and a nationwide system of law courts and juries had been introduced. Cheap and efficient government had replaced or amalgamated the myriad of competing and overlapping authorities and jurisdictions surviving from a feudal past. Poland, for the first time in her chequered history, had known efficient administration and a national civil service—the lesson was never fully forgotten. In Germany, from 1803 onwards, Napoleon had abolished the outworn Holy Roman Empire, hacked through the tangled network of petty principalities and Free Cities, and reduced their number from 396 to 40 . . . Of the surviving German states, eighteen had eventually been grouped together in the Confederation of the Rhine and had begun to be welded into a common customs union. Here again, there was no going back to the pre-revolutionary past. Old dynasties were re-enthroned, liberal constitutions were withdrawn, and most of Europe's rulers were incapable of understanding the new forces that were at work; but there was remarkably little re-shuffling of the Grand Empire's geographical boundaries and many of its institutions were left substantially untouched. The Civil Code remained in a score of European states from Belgium to Naples and from the Rhineland to the new Kingdom of Poland . . . quite apart from the revolutionary principles that the French armies carried around Europe, (Napoleon's) administrative reforms, the Civil Code, the destruction of feudalism, the rationalisation of government, the institution of uniform weights and measures and removal of internal customs could hardly fail to have something of the same unifying effects on the occupied countries as the reforms of the Constituent Assembly and Convention had had on France herself." (Rude G. *Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815*, pp. 293-5).
16. Wohlforth describes many of the post-war events in sufficient detail for the reader to draw out these parallels for himself. Useful accounts are also in Black R. *Stalinism in Britain* (1970) and Claudin F. *From Comintern to Cominform* (1975).
17. Details of the settlement are in Zaghi C. *Bonaparte e il Direttorio dopo Campoformio* (Bonaparte and the Directory after Campoformio) (1956), Chapters I, II and IV.
18. For accounts of opposition to the French from the left in Italy see Vaccarino, G. *I patrioti 'anarchistes' e l'idea dell'unità italiana* (The 'anarchist' patriots and the idea of Italian unity) (1955) pp. 224 et seq., and Rude G. *Revolutionary Europe 1783-1815*, p. 218.
19. "The Workers' State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism" pp. 44-45.
20. Deutscher Vol I, p. 92 et seq.
21. Trotsky L. *1905*, (1972) p. 72.
22. In 1905 he speaks of the peasantry repaying the revolution "with black ingratitude: the liberated peasants became fanatics of 'order'" (*op cit* p. 70). The way in which this happened in the 1848 revolution is vividly described in Marx's 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'.
23. *Results and Prospects*, (London, 1962), p. 203.
24. *Results and Prospects*, p. 203-4.
25. Deutscher I. *Trotsky* Vol. II: *The Prophet Unarmed*, p. 244-5.

26. Trotsky drew out the parallels with the French Revolution most vividly in his speech before the Central Control Commission in July 1927 (reprinted in *The Stalin School of Falsification* (1974) pp 112- 116.
27. See his 'Letter to Friends' of October 1928, summarised in Deutscher, *Trotsky* Vol II, pp. 458-60, in which he raised the possibility that Soviet 'Bonapartism' might take the form of a military coup against Stalin. Trotsky was also influenced by the independent analysis of the bureaucracy's rise circulated by Christian Rakovsky among his fellow oppositionists in exile in the summer of 1928, i.e. before Stalin's 'left turn' had become clear (see Rakovsky's 'Letter to Valentinov', quoted in Deutscher *Trotsky*: Vol II, pp. 435 *et seq.*). Referring back to the French Thermidor, Rakovsky argued that in any revolution the original leadership is decimated, the masses become exhausted and apathetic and that a period of reactionary consolidation is the necessary result. While he abrasively portrayed the moral and intellectual sewer represented by Stalin and his supporters, he was pessimistic as to the Opposition's chances of rebuilding mass support in the near future. In *The Revolution Betrayed* (1936) Trotsky cites several of Rakovsky's passages in description of Soviet society. When Rakovsky himself (after nine months of torture by the GPU 'confessed' to treason and espionage at the Moscow trial of March 1938 his theory of Thermidor made a final, subtly ironic appearance. (Instead of being shot immediately he was sentenced to 25 years in the labour camps during which he vanished, along with so many others). In his final plea he goes out of his way (quite superfluously) to 'repudiate' the Opposition's theory of the Soviet Thermidor: "The criminals sitting here had to be taken from the house of the government . . . What form of insanity brought them to this dock of political infamy? I shall mention one explanation which is widely current . . . People are satisfied with the trite and shallow bourgeois explanation, according to which all revolutions finish by devouring their own children. The October Revolution, they say, did not escape this general law of historical fatalism. It is a ridiculous, groundless analogy. Bourgeois revolutions did indeed finish — excuse me if I cite here some theoretical arguments which, however, are of significance for the present moment — bourgeois revolutions did indeed finish by devouring their own children, because after they had triumphed they had to suppress their allies from among the people, their revolutionary allies of the Left. But the proletarian revolution, the revolution of the class which is revolutionary to the end, when it applies what Marx called "plebeian methods of retaliation", it applies them to those who stand in the way of the revolution, or to those who, as ourselves, were with the revolution, marched along with it for a certain time, and then stabbed it in the back. ('*The Case of the Anti-Soviet 'Bloc of Rights and Trotskyites'* (N.I. Bukharin, A.I. Rykov, G.G. Yagoda et al): *Verbatim Report*, [Moscow 1938] p 760). Rakovsky (an old Bolshevik of great culture, and one of Trotsky's closest political collaborators within the Opposition) must have known he could safely allude to the question of Thermidor with his tongue in his cheek. He had just heard Stalin's prosecutor Vyshinsky compare another of the accused, Yagoda, (the deposed GPU chief) with Joseph Fouché, the arch-turncoat and intriguer of the French revolution. Trainee priest, then professional atheist; Jacobin, then Thermidorean; betrayer of Babeuf, police chief under the Directorate, conspiring in its overthrow and continuing as police chief under Napoleon, Fouché was even offered the job (but prudently declined it) by the restored Louis XVIII! The comparison, as Rakovsky must have fully appreciated, fitted Vyshinsky and the ex-seminarist Stalin just as well as Yagoda.
28. *The Workers State and the Question of Thermidor and Bonapartism* (1935). The analysis of the Soviet Union is greatly extended in *The Revolution Betrayed* completed in 1936.
29. 'The USSR in War' in *In Defence of Marxism* pp. 22-24.
30. Renamed in 1977 the Socialist Workers Party.
31. In many places Trotsky emphasises the qualitatively greater social weight and power of the bureaucracy. For instance, again in 'The USSR in War': "Our critics have more than once argued that the present Soviet bureaucracy bears

- very little resemblance to either the bourgeois or labour (i.e. social democratic and similar) bureaucracy in capitalist society; that to a far greater degree than fascist bureaucracy it represents a new and much more powerful social formation. This is quite correct and we have never closed our eyes to it." (p. 6).
32. Mao, in a recently published interview with former French President Pompidou, reveals an illuminating admiration of and interest in Bonaparte: "Napoleon's methods were the best. He dissolved all the assemblies, and he himself chose the people to govern with", plus numerous other comments. The conversation with Pompidou took place in 1973 and unashamedly reeks (on both sides) of nationalist realpolitik (see *The Observer* Colour Supplement, 24 October 1976; translated extracts from *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Paris).
 33. In *In Defence of Marxism*, (1966) pp. 30-31.
 34. Comecon is the nearest approximation to international economic planning among the workers' states. It was set up by Stalin in 1949 (as part of his response to Marshall Aid and the Cold War politics of the Western powers) when the social transformation of the buffer zone was being completed. Yugoslavia did not join until 1956 (the Tito-Stalin split having occurred the year before Comecon was set up), China never became a member and Albania quit in 1962.
 35. See Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, (1952).
 36. Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin* (1936), p. 55. He is criticising the draft programme of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern.
 37. Voznesensky, Soviet Politbureau member and head of national economic planning, was arrested in March 1949 and shot in 1950. He was accused of 'fetishing the law of value' to the detriment of Stalin's policy of concentrating on heavy industry. Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* argued that consumer goods, but not producer (investment) goods, should be 'commodities coming under the law of value' and that the accounting prices of producer goods could not be used to regulate the labour used in their production, or between them and consumption goods. It followed from this position—which reflected Stalinist practice—that no rational and efficient division of labour and terms of trade could be established between the workers' states, as far as producer goods were concerned. Voznesensky's murder, therefore, seems to have been part of enforcing the policies of national bureaucracies and separate structures in the European workers' states. Industrial goods prices were raised in the USSR under Voznesensky by around 60% in January 1949. After his removal they were almost equally drastically cut back again, restoring the huge effective subsidies to producer goods. (See Nove A. *An Economic History of the USSR* (1969) p. 306). Voznesensky himself was 'rehabilitated' by Khrushchev in 1956. For a contemporary Trotskyist view by Mandel of the post-war Soviet debates on economics and Stalin's *Economic Problems* . . . see Germain E. *Problemes economiques de l'URSS* (Economic Problems of the USSR) *Quatrieme Internationale* pamphlet, 1953.
 38. The states allied in one political form or another, with Nazi Germany against the USSR.
 39. See Kaser M. *Comecon* (1967) pp. 42, 44.
 40. The classic anecdote is that of the Polish light bulb factory whose production norms were set simply in watts. It brilliantly 'overfulfilled the norm' by producing nothing but 200 watt bulbs (almost as cheap as weaker ones) and for months Polish homes were floodlit while electricity was squandered.
 41. Chen N.R. and Gallenson W. *The Chinese Economy under Communism* (1969), p. 35.
 42. From 1959-64 Chinese foreign trade dropped by about a third, and the proportion with the USSR fell from 48% to 14% (Chen N.R. and Gallenson W. *The Chinese Economy under Communism* (1969), pp. 201, 207).
 43. One result of the economic crisis and recession in the 1970's has been a sharp acceleration in the level of indebtedness of all European workers' states vis-a-vis the developed capitalist states. Western economic commentators have expressed alarm both at the size of the debt and at the fact that, by and large, it is being used to maintain consumption levels in face of a deteriorating balance of trade position.

44. Stalin's heirs moved very hesitantly in matters of police-political control, and with good reason. The last four years of Stalin's rule were marked by a series of spectacular purges on the party-state apparatuses of Eastern Europe—Stalinist strongman and Interior Minister Raik, with others, in Hungary (executed in September 1949); even more extensive purges in Czechoslovakia in 1950-51, culminating in the anti-semitic trial and hanging of Slansky and others (November 1952); and the ousting of Gomulka and his supporters in Poland (completed November 1949). The political purges *also* removed very large numbers of lower-ranking party members; in this period, it is estimated, an average of one in four was removed in the newly-mushroomed Eastern European parties. With all this in the very recent past Malenkov and his fellow-chiefs must have felt in 1953 that to loosen the safety-valve even a little would be to risk an explosion. All the purges of 1949-53 followed on the split with Tito; most of those accused were charged with collaborating with Tito and/or the German/US /British intelligence services (the Stalinist propaganda machine treated these, at the time, as wholly synonymous). Wohlforth points out that one effect of these purges was to consolidate Stalin's monolithic political rule in Eastern Europe, by destroying or ousting all who might prove shaky or restive. A feel for the atmosphere of the Stalinist campaign against Tito-Trotsky-Fascism in these years makes it easier to understand why the cadres of the Fourth International felt themselves propelled towards political collaboration with the Titoite forces. (A vivid account of the blood-letting and slanders of the period is given by the Spanish former Stalinist Fernando Claudin in *The Communist Movement: from Comintern to Cominform* (English edition, 1975), especially Chapter 7 "The Yugoslav Break". The final irony of this phase came when, after Stalin's death, the Soviet leadership—at the same moment they were quietly disbanding the anti-Tito campaign—executed as a scapegoat Beria, the last of Stalin's executioners-in-chief. The reason they gave—privately—to foreign Communist Party leaders was that Beria was in secret and treasonable correspondence with Rankovic, the head of Tito's secret police! (See Senica G. *Togliatti and Stalin* (1961) quoted in Claudin *op cit* p.773.
45. See Nagy, *On Communism* p. 240.
46. His *On Communism* addressed to the Hungarian Party leadership and Khrushchev was completed around June 1956.
47. To be precise Tito approved Rakosi's removal, but withheld his open approval of Gero until October, on the very eve of the first fighting in Budapest. Given the inflammable state of Eastern Europe during the summer of 1956, Tito was in a position to drive a hard bargain over 'reconciliation' with the Kremlin.
48. Among many accounts perhaps the best are *Hungarian Tragedy* (1956) by Peter Fryer (*Daily Worker* correspondent in Budapest at the time, who broke with the CP and joined the Trotskyist movement) and *Pologne-Hongrie 1956* (1956) by (eds.) Jean-Jacques Maries and Balacs Nagy, written when both were supporters of the OCl. Among liberal accounts: F. Fejto *Budapest 1956* (1966), T. Meray *Thirteen Days that Shook the Kremlin* (1959) and P. Zinner *Revolution in Hungary* (1962). Chris Harman's *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (1974), written from a 'state-capitalist' standpoint, contains useful quotations. The same is true of Alan Lomax's *Hungary 1956* (1971), written from a quasi-anarchist standpoint.
49. A subordinate reason which may well have stiffened opposition in the top echelons of the Polish CP for Soviet military action is the exceptionally savage character of the Stalin purges in that party. In 1938 the Polish CP was dissolved on the pretext of being ridden with police agents and 'Trotskyists'. Almost all its leading members were called to Moscow and killed; virtually the only ones to escape were those who were in Polish prisons. For details see Dziewanowski M. K. *The Communist Party of Poland* (1959) Deutscher I 'The Tragedy of the Polish Communist Party' in *Marxism in our Time* (1971), and Karol K.S. *Visa for Poland* (1959).
50. For general accounts of the 1956 events see also Brzezinski ZK, *The Soviet Bloc* (1967), Fejto F. *History of the People's Democracies* (1975), Syrop K. *Spring in*

- October (1957) and Harman C. *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (1974) written from the standpoint of the SWP.
51. Tito provided the first demonstration that those Stalinists who have organised the revolutionary destruction of capitalism in their own right find no difficulty in crossing class lines in the interests of intra-Stalinist 'diplomacy'. See Tito's speech at Pula of November 11 1956, in which he condemned Nagy and backed Kadar as 'that which is most honest in Hungary'. (Quoted in Zinner *op cit.* p. 257). Twelve years later Ho Chi Minh and Castro gave belated—but definite—support to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia.
52. Radio Peking, quoted in Brzezinski *op. cit* p. 278.
53. *People's Daily*, 4 November 1956, quoted in Gittings *op. cit* p. 70. In December the Chinese leadership linked—accurately—justification of the intervention in Hungary to a cautious defence of Stalin's record (see 'More on the Historical Experience of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat' (29 December 1956) translated in New China News Agency of 31 December 1956).
54. See Fejto *History of the People's Democracies* p. 367.
55. See Kaser M.C. *Comecon* (1967) pp. 107 *et seq.*
56. In a declaration of April 1964 Rumanian CP chief Georgiu-Dej's Central Committee said "... since the essence of the suggested measure lies in shifting some functions of economic management from the competence of the respective state to the attribution of super-state bodies or organs, these measures are not in keeping with the principles which underlie the relations between socialist countries" (quoted in Kaser M. *Comecon* p. 108). In June 1963 the Chinese CP attacked Soviet attempts to prevent other socialist countries 'from applying the principle of relying mainly on their own efforts in their construction and from developing their economies on the basis of independence' in more trenchant terms. (Hsinhua News Agency, 17 June 1963; quoted in Kaser M. *Comecon*, p. 110).
57. There is a voluminous bourgeois literature on these reforms, largely angled at showing that (and in what ways) the workers' states are being forced to revert to 'competitive' methods of production and pricing. Virtually the whole of it, though, is blinkered by seeing the market as a 'natural' form struggling to escape from within socialised economies. It sees, that is to say, what is transitional as fundamental and vice versa.
58. Similar economic 'reforms' were initiated in Cuba from 1970.
59. Carlos Rafael Rodriguez (born 1913) was a leader of the Student Directorate in the south coast town of Cienfuegos where he was a candidate for mayor in 1933. Later he joined the Communist Party and has been a leading intellectual of the party ever since. He was one of the two Communists in Batista's wartime Cabinet. In 1958 he joined Castro in the Sierra as a delegate from the Popular Socialist Party (the name the CP had adopted in 1944 as part of its popular frontist policy). Since 1962 he has occupied many important government posts, especially in relation to foreign and economic affairs. He has been a member of the Secretariat of the Cuban Communist Party founded in 1965 and in 1976 joined its Political Bureau.
60. See Hugh Thomas, *Cuba or the Pursuit of Freedom*, (1971).
61. The popular weekly magazine *Bohemia*, which supported the revolution, carried an editorial in its January 11 1959 issue headlined "Against Communism". In the article it welcomed as a "positive statement" "the declaration in which the leader of the revolution, doctor Fidel Castro, announced that the new government would reject all relations with dictatorially ruled states, mentioning in the first place the Soviet Union. It is not possible for there to be the slightest convergence between those who have just emancipated their people and those who have trodden down the freedoms of a dozen European countries, machine-gunned the defenceless Hungarian people and constitute the greatest example of despotism in the world . . . Communism here will have no justification or involvement in power. The revolution which goes forward inexorably is Cuban and democratic in intention and practice. It has nothing to do with the enemies of freedom."

62. Government of Cuba, *Statistical Bulletin*, 1970.
63. See Michael Tatu, *Power in the Kremlin* (1969), pp. 219-220.
64. For US estimates of Soviet nuclear strength at the time, see Wolfe T.W. *Soviet Power and Europe 1945-70* (Rand Corporation, 1970) pp. 82-98.
65. For details of the crisis, based on pro-Kennedy US sources, see Elie Abel *The Missiles of October* (1969).
66. For these earlier discussions on Eastern Europe and China see below p.98 and Wohlforth pp37-50.
67. Wohlforth completed *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* during 1963. At that time the split was a relatively new development, whose direction and historical significance was not easy to foresee. And there were times—such as after the fall of Khrushchev in 1964—when it appeared it might be at least partly healed.
68. Only reluctantly and partially for example, did Mao's faction accept Moscow's 'popular front' directions (conveyed by Stalin's spokesman 'right-deviationist' Wang Ming, and supported by Chou En-lai) to return into another subordinate 'united front' with the Kuomintang, the number one purpose of which would be to provide a common bulwark against Japan. See Benton G. 'The "Second Wang Ming Line" (1935-38)' in *The China Quarterly*, March 1975.
69. Stalin seems to have done little to obstruct US aggression in Korea. The Soviet Delegate on the UN Security Council, Malik, who could have vetoed UN backing for the US, boycotted the crucial meeting (June 27, 1950).
70. See 'Letter of the CC of the CCP (February '29, 1964) to the CC of the CPSU' published in *Peking Review* May 8 1964, and quoted in Gittings J. *Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute 1963-67* (1968) p. 55)
71. Hoxha's Communist partisans, using arms supplied both by the Allies and the Yugoslavs, drove out the Italian forces and took power at the end of the war. One of the most Stalinist of the Eastern European CP's, the Albanian Party also had something of the character of a clan, many leading positions being filled by Hoxha's relatives. A useful survey of English language sources on post-war Albania is the review article by Clogg R. in *Times Literary Supplement* 25 February 1977.
72. The main series, entitled 'Long live Leninism' appeared in April 1960. It was clearly directed at Khrushchev's plan for a summit with Eisenhower in May and at his attempts to reach a compromise with the US—at China's expense—over Formosa and the Chinese-Indian border dispute.
73. Between 1960 and 1969 China's share in Albania's trade rose from under 5% to almost 50% (according to Fejto p. 157). A similar rise is shown in Eckstein A. *Communist China's Economic Growth and Foreign Trade* (1966) p. 146.
74. In 1959 Nehru's government, basing itself on the frontiers drawn by British imperialism (the 'MacMillan line') provoked a series of border incidents in the area of Ladakh, a section of Western Tibet through which the Chinese had already built a highway to Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. Despite Chinese protests, the USSR took a diplomatic position of neutrality (ie in effect condoning India) and from 1960 began to negotiate a supply to India of weapons which could be used in the high frontier regions. The war proper erupted in October 1962, when Indian troops attempted to drive back the Chinese in the eastern sector, but the Chinese forces completely overran them there and in the west. (For details of the diplomacy see Neville Maxwell *India's China War 1972*, 2nd edition.) The Chinese assimilation of Tibet (which was always regarded as part of China, a claim never disputed as such by the Indian regime) and the overthrow of the feudal-monastic ruling class there in 1959 is briefly described by Wohlforth (pp 78-81) The People's Liberation Army entered Tibet in 1950 and for almost a decade the Chinese leadership attempted coexistence with the Dalai Lama and his self-owning entourage. In March 1959, after years of sporadic guerrilla attacks on the Chinese by tribal forces, there was an attempted coup in Lhasa, following the collapse of which the Dalai Lama fled to India. Even the most reactionary supporters of the Dalai Lama and the 'independence' of the Tibetan ruling caste now grant that the armed opposition to China was largely financed and supported by the CIA and Chiang Kai-shek, through Nepal and India. (See Peissel M. *The Secret War in Tibet* (1973), p. 191) Since 1959 self-

dom and religious bondage have been largely abolished, and some economic development made with the aid of the highway built in the early 1950's. Lhasa was the scene of sharp struggles—involving Tibetan youth as well as Chinese—during the Cultural Revolution. For a Chinese account of the social system see 'Concerning the Question of Tibet', quoted in International Commission of Jurists Report *Tibet and the Chinese People's Republic* (1960) pp. 66 et seq.

75. In July 1964 Mao stated that the USSR had 'appropriated part of Rumania (i.e. Moldavia. More recently the Rumanian Stalinists themselves have laid public claim to this). Having cut off a portion of East Germany they chased the local inhabitants into West Germany. They detached a part of Poland, annexed it to the Soviet Union, and gave a part of East Germany to Poland as compensation. The same thing took place in Finland. The Russians took everything they could. Some people have declared that the Sinhiang Area (in the extreme west of China, near the frontier with India, Pakistan and the USSR) and territories north of the Amur river (in the north west corner of China, bordering the USSR) must be included in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is concentrating troops along its border . . . In regard to the Kurile Islands (occupied by the USSR since 1945), the question is clear as far as we are concerned—they must be returned to Japan' (excerpts from interviews with the Japanese delegation, quoted in Gittings J. *op cit* p. 167, my parentheses). Mao's statement, of course, implies that the 'great power chauvinism' which carried out these annexations (in 1944-45) was Stalin's, not Khrushchev's.
76. Suslov M.A., report to CC of 14 February 1964 in 'World Communist Unity' (April 1964) and quoted in Brzezinski Z.K. *op cit* p. 422. Suslov described Chinese attempts to topple Khrushchev as 'an empty, hopeless adventure . . . doomed to a complete and shameful failure'. Khrushchev fell eight months later. The CCP leadership had earlier accused Khrushchev of giving aid and comfort to Trotskyism in denouncing Stalin at the CPSU's Twentieth Congress and in his policies in Poland and Hungary in 1956 (*People's Daily* and *Red Flag* editorial, 6 September 1963, quoted in Gittings J. *op cit* p. 71). For Chinese policy towards Poland and Hungary *at the time*, see above p.126. The Chinese leadership have repeatedly thrown accusations of 'Trotskyism' at their political opponents, most recently at the 'Gang of Four' ousted following Mao's death in 1976 (see *Peking Review* 11 February 1977).
77. See *Theory of Structural Assimilation* pp75-78
78. See *Theory of Structural Assimilation* p77. See also above, p.128, on Rumanian resistance to Soviet policy within Comecon.
79. As the Pabloite current tended to argue, though only *after* the Tito-Stalin split of 1948.
80. I.e. notably in this context, China.
81. Stalin's remark, quoted in Djilas M. *Conversations with Stalin* (1963) p. 141, and referred to in *The Theory of Structural Assimilation* p.69. We can be fairly confident that up to 1947, when the Chinese CP's counterattack against the Kuomintang began, Stalin was pressing mainly for a Kuomintang-CP government. Such a policy would have corresponded to the military buffer under capitalist governments he was seeking in eastern Europe. The prime difference, of course, was that the post-war bourgeois governments of eastern Europe were supervised by the Red Army; in China the Communist Party and its own military organs would have had to guarantee any coalition government's role in securing the vast frontier with the Soviet Union.
82. Although it is true that the CCP and its army found its main social support in the peasantry, the Yanan government did *not* appropriate or redistribute the land; they restrained themselves to limitations on rents and other protective measures. See, for example, the decree of 1942 (quoted in Guillermez, *A History of the Chinese Communist Party, 1929-41*, p. 339).
83. In other countries—e.g. Greece, Malaya—similar but less developed conditions existed, but the Communist forces were destroyed by imperialism.
84. On this, see also below, pp144 ff.
85. Such as Cuba.

86. Serialised in *Intercontinental Press*, Vol 10 (1972), p. 256 *et seq.*
87. *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, p.8, my parentheses.
88. Though both these types may be found among the political recollections of our movement.
89. See *The Theory of Structural Assimilation*, pp.38-44.
90. But not before he had, with Cannon, *backed* Pablo in expelling Lambert and the French majority early in 1952 for refusing to enter the CP.
91. See, for example, 'Cuba: Trotsky's method versus Maitan's liquidationism' by David Keil, June 1976, (SWP Internal Bulletin). Keil attacks two typical articles on Cuba (in *Intercontinental Press* of March 15 and April 26, 1976) in which 'Maitan has developed a hardened centrist approach to Cuba—part of his centrist approach to everything—and he ends up with an apology for Stalinism. He can do this because he is not a Trotskyist and has no idea what Stalinism is, in my opinion.'
92. *Trotskyism Versus Revisionism: A Documentary History*, (ed. Slaughter, 6 volumes, 1975-6). For some of the most blatant falsifications on the first volume, see 'The WRP School of Falsification' in *Socialist Press* No. 2, February 20, 1975; reprinted in *Behind the Smokescreen* (1976) pp. 1-5.
93. The WRP's fullest recent treatment of the Vietnamese revolution is 'Stalinism and the Liberation of Vietnam' by Steven Johns, in *Workers Press*, August 5-8, 1975. A thorough reply to Johns by the WSL is 'Vietnam: WRP on the road back to Pabloism' in *Socialist Press* No. 19, October 15, 1975, reprinted in *Behind the Smokescreen* (1976, pp 19-26).

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Front cover: (top) Saigon, 1975
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Tim Wohlforth

Timothy Andrew Wohlforth (born May 15, 1933), is a **United States** former **Trotskyist** leader. Since leaving the Trotskyist movement he has become a writer of **crime fiction** and of politically oriented non-fiction.

As a student, Wohlforth joined the youth section of **Max Shachtman's Independent Socialist League (ISL)**, the **Socialist Youth League** in 1953.^[1] He broke with Shachtman in 1957 when the ISL moved rightward to merge with the **Socialist Party of America**. Later that year, Wohlforth and a minority of ISL members joined the **Socialist Workers Party (SWP)**, which was the main Trotskyist group in the US at the time.^[2]

In the early 1960s when the SWP rejoined the **International Secretariat of the Fourth International** and developed an uncritical attitude towards the **Cuban Revolution**, a minority of members led by Wohlforth and **James Robertson** (another former ISL member) formed the *Revolutionary Tendency* within the SWP. While Robertson left the SWP in 1962 and went on to form the **Spartacist Group**, later **Spartacist League**, Wohlforth and his supporters remained within the SWP and fought for the perspective of the **International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI)**. They were expelled in 1964 after demanding a discussion of the significance of the **Sri Lankan Lanka Sama Samaja Party's** entry into the government of **Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike**. The US supporters of the ICFI formed the **American Committee of the Fourth International**, and in 1966 they formed the **Workers League**.^[2]

In 1974, the ICFI discovered that Wohlforth's partner, **Nancy Fields**, an active member of the **Workers League**, was raised by a relative who had worked for the **Central Intelligence Agency's** computer division and had ties to top-ranking agency officials. The **Workers League Political Committee** and **ICFI** criticized the fact that neither Fields nor Wohlforth had revealed this to the League. In August 1974, the League's central committee suspended Fields from membership and removed Wohlforth as national secretary pending a commission of inquiry, in a unanimous vote that included Wohlforth's. Both left the League, and Wohlforth rejoined the SWP. An investigation conducted by the **Workers League** concluded that Fields did not have connections to the **CIA**, and the two were requested to resume their membership. However, they refused.^[3]

Wohlforth now claims that the **Workers League** became a **cult**, largely due to the domination and manipulations of the principal ICFI leader at the time, **Gerry Healy**.

Wohlforth has been a member of the **Democratic Socialists of America**. In 1994 he published his memoirs, *The Prophet's Children*. He subsequently co-authored *On The Edge: Political Cults of the Left and Right* (2000) with **Dennis Tourish**. His former wife **Nancy Wohlforth**, is Secretary-Treasurer of the **Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU)** and on the Executive Committee of the **AFL-CIO**.^[4] He is now married to **Joyce Gibrick**.

1 See also

- Tim Wohlforth, *The Prophet's Children : Travels on the American Left*, Humanities Press, 1994, ISBN 0-391-03802-8
- *On the Edge: Political Cults Right and Left*, M. E. Sharpe, 2000 (with Dennis Tourish), ISBN 0-7656-0639-9

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- [2] **Harry Ratner**, "Review of *The Prophet's Children*", *New Interventions*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1996 (accessed 2008-08-15).
- [3] **David North**, *The Heritage We Defend*, Detroit, 1988.
- [4] **Nancy Wohlforth**, *OPEIU Website* (accessed 2008-08-15)

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